Torres urges govt employees to undergo COVID-19 test. PAGE 3
PSS is awarded over $20M in CARES Act funds. PAGE 4

75¢

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXX, Issue No. 90
THURSDAY MAY 7, 2020
www.saipantribune.com
www.facebook.com/saipantribune

NEARLY DONE
Construction work on the new U.S. federal courthouse building in Gualo Rai appears to be nearly done. It broke ground in December 2017 and was originally scheduled for completion in summer last year. Once completed, it will house the U.S. District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. Probation Office, the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Federal Protective Service. The courthouse will include one courtroom, two judges' chambers, a jury assembly room and office space for building tenants. There is no word yet on when the project will be finished. Since 1989, the U.S. District Court has convened at the Horiguchi Building.
KRIZEL TUAZON

New case is confirmed positive

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The presumptive positive case of the 17-year-old male that was disclosed last May 5 was confirmed positive yesterday, giving the CNMI a total of 15 confirmed positive cases and the first positive COVID-19 case in the last 18 days.

The individual is now iso-

See NEW on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 5pm, May 6, 2020**

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	149	1	149
Recovered	124	0	124
Active	19	1	20
Deaths	6*	0	6*

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	14	1	15
Recovered	12	0	12
Active	0	1	1
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			1,797

*Total includes a sailor from the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*.

**Saipan has one new confirmed positive COVID-19 case, with 1,797 persons tested at the community-based testing at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. Guam has one case who was previously released from isolation and is now back in active isolation.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

'Stimulus checks' out soon

The U.S. Treasury will now transfer $37.6 million to the CNMI government within the next few days so it could release stimulus checks to eligible CNMI taxpayers as soon

See STIMULUS on Page 4

> Up to $1,200 for each eligible individual and $2,400 for joint returns, as well as $500 for each qualifying child

Direct deposit your stimulus check

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Skip going to the bank and have your stimulus check deposited directly into your bank account.

With the social distancing directive still in place, the Department of Finance is making it easier and more convenient for eligible CNMI

See DIRECT on Page 4

ON THE NET
https://finance.gov.mp/stimulus/

Philippines' ABS-CBN goes off air

By JIM GOMEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The leading broadcast network in the Philippines went off the air under government order Tuesday, sparking shock over the loss of a major news provider during the coronavirus pandemic and accusations of targeting a presidential critic.

See OFF AIR on Page 4

An employee lights candles in front of the headquarters of broadcast network ABS-CBN on Tuesday, May 5, 2020, in Manila, Philippines.
AP

INSIDE

BUSINESS
American Pizza & Grill in Garapan reopened this week after more than a month's hiatus.
PAGE 11

NATION
Outside New York City, the infection rate is rising even as states move to lift their lockdowns.
PAGE 12

WORLD
Britain now has Europe's highest official coronavirus death toll, overtaking Italy.
PAGE 13

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

A look at CPA's game plan to restart the NMI economy

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Despite COVID-19 pandemic, the Commonwealth Ports Authority's plans for the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport have not changed.

CPA board chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds said yesterday that CPA continues to forge ahead in pursuing their goal to either upgrade and expand the existing airport facilities or build a new terminal that they believe is critical to growing a sustainable economy for the CNMI.

"CPA is excited about this project and we are excited about the steps that we are taking on the path to helping our Commonwealth rise," said King-Hinds, when asked about CPA's plans to revive the tourism industry after the COVID-19 crisis.

She disclosed that they recently submitted a grant application—in collaboration with the Office of the Governor and the assistance of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' senior policy adviser Glenna Palacios-Reyes—to assist CPA in undertaking a Strategic Long Range Intermodal Study, which will help CPA lay the foundation for a robust public discussion and vetting, based on hard data, projected economic growth, financial capability, and current conditions of their existing facilities.

"We are cautiously optimistic that, with the awarding of this grant, the required due diligence for such a huge undertaking will begin," she said.

King-Hinds said they want a process that's transparent, with buy-in from their stakeholders, industry partners and the community and having information that is publicly available, and it is believed that this study will be key to that.

"Whichever course we end up pursuing, we are talking about a capital investment in the hundreds of millions potentially," she said.

King-Hinds said she knows it's difficult right now, given the state of the CNMI's economy, to imagine such an endeavor. "However, we are going to end up being stuck in the same cyclical economic rut if we don't shift our paradigm in terms of what we need to invest in, to not only grow our tourism industry but to attract new, clean investment opportunities to diversify our economic portfolio," she said.

King-Hinds

The CNMI's ports are the first and last impression of the Commonwealth, but right now, it's not the best, she said. Even if they fix the leaky roofs at the airport, which they are currently working on, it doesn't change the fact that it's outdated and is limited in capacity.

Last November, the CPA board started public discussions on CPA's plan to build a new $300-million terminal to replace the existing Saipan international airport that King-Hinds described as "outdated and deteriorating."

IPI ordered to pay $29K attorneys' fees, costs to 7 ex-workers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona ordered Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC on Tuesday to pay a total of $29,459 in attorneys' fees and costs incurred by the seven former workers who are suing IPI and its contractor and subcontractor.

Manglona ordered IPI to pay the former workers $25,872 for hours expended by their New York-based counsel Aaron Halegua, and $1,782 for hours expended by their local counsel, Bruce Berline.

The judge also ordered IPI to pay the former workers $1,648 for hours expended by the former workers' paralegal, Jacob Kessler, and $156 in costs.

The seven workers from China, who worked on IPI's casino construction project in Garapan, have asked the court to award them $31,801 in attorneys' fees and $156 in costs in connection with their countermotion to compel.

They said that their proposed hourly rates of $300 for Berline and $417 for Halegua are all reasonable.

Berline claimed he spent 4.44 hours, for a total amount of $1,332. Halegua claimed he spent 68.3 hours, for a total amount of $28,481.

The seven, through Halegua and Berline, are suing IPI and its contractor and subcontractor over accidents at the worksite.

IPI, through counsel Kelley M. Butcher, said the plaintiffs' request for over $30,000 in fees is "simply unreasonable and unsustainable."

With respect to Halegua, Manglona said this case is complex and that his expertise is beyond what a local attorney could provide. Using a national market rate for similarly experienced and skilled attorneys, Manglona said she finds that a $400 hourly rate is a reasonable fee.

On the number of hours, the judge said Halegua requested reimbursement for 68.3 hours, a 10% reduction from the 75.88 hours he spent attempting to obtain discovery from IPI, responding to IPI's objection and discovery motions, filing the motion to compel, and preparing the fee motion. Halegua also requested an additional 19.45 hours for time spent on the reply brief. His total hours expended are 95.33.

In reviewing the hours Halegua submitted, Manglona found that some hours must be excluded but that he reasonably expended 64.68 hours in bringing this motion to compel, resulting in a fee award of $25,872.

For Berline, the judge said there is evidence that $300 is a reasonable hourly rate for an attorney of the same skill, reputation and experience in the CNMI. Manglona finds that an hourly rate of $300 for Berline is appropriate. Berline billed 6.44 hours in relation to this motion. The judge said she will discount the 0.5 hours spent on the unfiled motion to shorten time. She said that, at an hourly rate of $300, Berline's hours results in a fee award of $1,782.

For Kessler, plaintiffs request a $166 hourly rate for 16.4 hours performed as Halegua's paralegal. Considering the range of fees throughout the country, Manglona pegged Kessler's hourly rate at $125 as reasonable. Manglona found 13.19 billable hours. At $125 per hour, the judge determined that fees awarded to plaintiffs for Kessler should total $1,648.

At a hearing last Dec. 12, Manglona granted the former workers' countermotion to compel IPI to respond to their discovery requests. The judge also granted the workers' motion to sanction IPI and ordered the company to pay attorneys' fees to the plaintiffs/workers for bringing the motion to compel.

The plaintiffs—Tianming Wang, Dong Han, Yongjun Meng, Liangcai Sun, Youli Wang, Quingchun Xu, and Xiyang Du—are suing IPI, MCC International Saipan Ltd. Co. and MCC's subcontractor, Gold Mantis Construction Decoration (CNMI) LLC, over the alleged injuries they suffered during accidents at the worksite of IPI's resort/casino project in Garapan.

The plaintiffs are suing defendants for alleged forced labor in violation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, forced labor in violation of the CNMI Anti-Trafficking Act, negligence, and liability for employees of subcontractor.

The workers alleged, among other things, that they were forced to work long hours for below minimum wage under extremely dangerous conditions at the casino-resort worksite.

WHO: Improper mask use increases risk of infection

By TRAVIS RAUSCHENBERGER
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

SAIPAN TRIBUNE
Screen grab shows Gov. Ralph DLG Torres in one of his video updates on the COVID-19 situation in the CNMI.

Turns out, there is a proper way—and an improper way—of wearing a face mask and, according to World Health Organization guidelines, wearing it pulled down around your chin may actually increase your risk for COVID-19 infection.

In guidelines the WHO issued to teach the public about the proper way of wearing face masks, it said that "the use of a mask alone is insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection, and other measures should also be adopted." Those include social distancing and frequent hand washing, plus wearing and removing the mask correctly.

According to the WHO advisory, improper mask usage may actually increase the mask wearer's risk of contracting COVID-19. It cited as examples of what not to do the practices of wearing the mask so that it covers only the mouth but not the nose, pulling the mask down over the chin or wearing it on other parts of the face or head before replacing it over the mouth and nose. Among those who've been shown doing these are Gov. Ralph DLG Torres in his video updates about the COVID-19 pandemic. In these videos, the governor can be seen wearing both cloth and medical grade face masks pulled down around his chin.

The WHO has also cautioned that wearing a face mask may provide the wearer with a false sense of security, causing them to neglect other important preventative measures and opening themselves up to contracting the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends wearing a cloth mask or other face covering in public to prevent the spread of the virus. Cloth masks are used as a way to prevent the wearer from spreading the coronavirus to others via respiratory droplets that are expelled from a person's mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze. This is especially useful because some people who are infected with COVID-19 may be able to transmit the virus before they begin showing symptoms, or may never develop symptoms at all.

HOW TO WEAR A FACE MASK

When wearing a face mask, regardless of the type or material, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Before putting on the mask, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. Follow proper technique and scrub for at least 20 seconds.
- When putting on the mask, make sure that it covers both your nose and mouth, and ensure that there are no gaps on the sides.
- While wearing the mask, avoid adjusting or touching the front of it. If you do, immediately wash or sanitize your hands. DO NOT pull the mask down over your chin to talk to someone.
- Remove the mask using the straps around the ears or the back of the head. Immediately dispose of single-use masks and place cloth masks in a designated bin to be washed. Wash your hands again after the mask removal is complete.

Remember, the purpose of the mask is to protect others from germs that you may be carrying. By touching the front of your mask, you may be getting the germs trapped by the mask on your hands and spreading them to objects and other people by touch. Additionally, touching the front of your mask or wearing it on other parts of the face can transfer germs that you have picked up from objects and people onto the mask which, if then placed back over your mouth and nose, may allow those germs to permeate the material of the mask and get in your mouth or nose. This is especially important when wearing cloth masks.

SOURCE: https://www.who.int/, https://www.cdc.gov/

2 criminal cases vs Gordon Castro dismissed

» Death certificate indicates hostage-taker shot in the head, chest

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court dismissed Tuesday the two criminal cases filed against Gordon Aldan Castro, a 31-year-old man who was killed after a 38-hour hostage drama in San Antonio last March.

Associate Judge Wesley M. Bogdan dismissed one case against Castro that was filed in 2015 and another case filed in 2019, as the defendant is already dead.

Hinds

Assistant attorney general Chester Hinds, counsel for the CNMI government, requested the court to dismiss the two cases last April 16, citing Castro's death. A death certificate indicated that Castro died on March 12, 2000, due to a gunshot in the head and chest. Hinds attached the death certificate in support of the government's motion to dismiss.

Saipan Tribune learned yesterday that the 2015 case was about the government's petition to revoke Castro's probation in connection with his conviction in a criminal case that year.

In the 2019 case, Castro was charged with possession and trafficking of methamphetamine following a sting operation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Task Force in January 2019.

Armed with a knife, Castro allegedly held his family hostage for seven hours at his house in San Antonio/Afetnas on Sept. 26, 2015.

Castro was already sleeping with his family when members of the Department of Public Safety's Special Enforcement and Action Section entered the house on Sept. 27, 2015, at 5:46am, according to a police report.

In 2016, Castro pleaded guilty to assault with a dangerous weapon. He was sentenced to 284 days of time served. Castro was placed on supervised probation for five years and ordered to receive mental health counseling/treatment while on probation.

Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho had expressed concern at the sentencing, saying there appears to be no meaningful way to provide mental health care to defendants with mental illnesses and/or disability in the CNMI criminal justice system.

Last March 12, the 38-hour hostage drama ended with the death of Castro and his girlfriend after law enforcers stormed Castro's home in San Antonio/Afetnas. Police said Castro fired several rounds at the police officers, causing them to return fire and enabling them to "neutralize the threat." The report did not indicate how the girlfriend was killed.

The hostage-taking started when police were executing an arrest warrant for Castro at his residence last March 10, but he shot a few rounds in the air to scare off the police.

The warrant of arrest was for attempted first-degree murder, assault with a dangerous weapon, unlawful discharge of a firearm, possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony, use of a weapon in the furtherance of a crime of violence, and disturbing the peace. In this case, he allegedly shot two people. He was not formally charged in this matter because he was killed during the second hostage-taking incident.

IN A BID TO REOPEN GOVT OFFICES

Torres urges govt employees to undergo COVID-19 test

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Some government offices will soon open but with the premise of ensuring the safety of all members of the community.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said in an interview that he has asked his Cabinet to have their employees get tested for COVID-19, and start opening up some of the offices.

"We want to open up some of our government departments slowly, but definitely give them the proper [personal protective equipment]...and make sure that our government employees are tested before they open up services to our community," he said.

According to Torres, almost all members of his Cabinet have already gone through COVID-19 testing, and the rest who have not are working on getting themselves tested.

The COVID-19 Task Force, through the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., has rolled out a free community-based testing a week ago, on April 28, and has tested almost 1,800 to date.

The governor expressed appreciation to the community for getting tested. "We've been wanting to do this and now that it's here. …We continue to encourage our community. The more number we get in, the better gauge we have as to what and how our community, our business partners can start opening up," he said.

Aside from government employees and community members who already got tested, Torres also acknowledged those in the private sector that are mandating their employees to go in and get swabbed and tested before they can go back out and provide services.

"The more we get our community tested, the more we'll be opening up our community slowly and definitely will, in consultation with our business partners [and] our public health," he said. "At some point, we all have to accept the new norm in life, and accept that our life would never be the same as we used to. There's [going to] be a lot of changes, but we all need to adjust [to those] new changes because those changes are for everybody."

BMV will resume some services on May 11

The CNMI Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Motor Vehicle will reopen to serve the community beginning Monday, May 11, 2020.

Starting Monday, May 11, up to May 15, 2020, BMV will be serving those who have expired drivers licenses and vehicle/watercraft registrations since the month of March or earlier. The department will make an announcement for all other vehicle/driver's license renewals that have expired beginning April 1, 2020.

BMV services will include vehicle registration and transfers, watercraft registration and transfers, and driver's license renewals. At this time

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday

- 9am-12pm-document drop-off for vehicle and/or watercraft registration renewal
- 9am-2pm-document drop-off for driver's license renewal
- 9am-2pm-updated document(s) and/or driver's license pick-up

See BMV on Next Page

PSS is awarded over $20M in CARES Act funds

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Public School System was officially awarded over $20 million from the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act and is expected to receive the funds as soon as next week.

According to Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred Ada, the news that PSS is entitled to $22.3 million from the CARES Act is a huge relief considering the financial struggles PSS has been facing,

"I'm elated, I'm very happy. This has been my prayer all along. This ensures that my people get paid. Boy, did it come and above and beyond," he said.

Ada said that all required documents and the application have been submitted and received by the U.S. Department of Education and PSS is expected to receive the funding sometime next week.

On top of the additional funding for PSS, the U.S. Department of Education has formally informed Gov. Ralph DLG Torres that $5.58 million has been allocated for the CNMI under the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund.

Torres said he will be working closely with Board of Education chair Janice Tenorio, Ada, Northern Marianas College Board of Regents chair Charles V. Cepeda and interim NMC president Frankie Eliptico to get this funding out to teachers, students, and staff as soon as possible.

"[This is to] ensure that funding gets to the students, teachers, and staff for distance learning resources, as well as addressing the COVID-19 budget shortfall to pay for salaries and operations," Torres said.

Initially, the CNMI, Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands were not on the initial list of emergency education allocations to the territories, with the exception of Puerto Rico.

"An error was made during the formulation of this critical aid to PSS and NMC and has disenfranchised our students in the CNMI. Congress and our delegate must correct this inequality in benefits. Students in the CNMI should not be treated any less important than those throughout the [United] States and Puerto Rico," he said.

Last Tuesday, U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos wrote Torres in response to his requests for emergency education funding, assuring him that the CNMI will receive the aid it needs to continue to provide public education.

"Thank you for all you are doing to lead [the] Northern Mariana Islands through this unprecedented national emergency. You are making important decisions every day to keep your citizens safe, and you are tackling head on the challenges created by COVID-19 in your communities, workplaces, and schools. While students and educators are facing significant disruptions and obstacles, you play an influential role in ensuring that learning continues for all students," DeVos wrote.

Torres thanks DeVos for her partnership in assisting the CNMI with this educational relief package.

"I thank President Trump, Secretary DeVos, and our federal partners both in Capitol Hill and in the U.S. Department of Education for their commitment to responding to my requests and for being true partners as we combat this crisis. People and government services are in severe need," said Torres.

OFF AIR

From Page 1

The National Telecommunications Commission ordered ABS-CBN Corp. to stop operating after its 25-year congressional franchise ended Monday. The network's application for a renewal has been pending in Congress, which is controlled by President Rodrigo Duterte's allies, but hearings have been delayed, in part by a coronavirus lockdown.

ABS-CBN, one of the country's oldest and most influential networks, broadcast on TV and radio for most of Tuesday but later went off the air.

"Millions of Filipinos will lose their source of news and entertainment ... when people need crucial and timely information as the nation deals with the COVID-19 pandemic," the media giant said in a statement.

Company President Carlo Katigbak appealed to people to let their feelings on the closure be "felt, expressed and heard" for the benefit of the network's more than 11,000 employees and millions of Filipinos who he said need the network's services "specially now in the worst time of sickness and hunger."

Media watchdogs accused Duterte and his government of muzzling independent media like ABS-CBN that have reported critically on issues including the president's anti-drug crackdown, in which thousands of mostly poor drug suspects have been killed. Government officials denied the closure was a press freedom issue, insisting that everyone must comply with the law.

"The order to shut ABS-CBN effectively unplugs one of the Philippines most trusted, independent sources of news. It is a crushing blow to press freedom, one that was obviously ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte to silence critical reporting on his government," said Shawn Crispin, a Bangkok-based representative for the Committee to Protect Journalists. "If he can shut down a media outfit as influential and powerful as ABS-CBN, then no independent media group is safe. The message is clear."

Opposition Sen. Risa Hontiveros said it was alarming that ABS-CBN was ordered to stop its operations in the middle of the pandemic. "The delivery of timely and correct information is essential to our COVID-19 response. This shutdown order goes against public welfare," Hontiveros said.

The telecommunication commission's order caused shock and confusion among lawmakers because the agency's top officials had agreed to grant a temporary operating license to ABS-CBN while Congress weighs its franchise renewal.

Rep. Franz Alvarez, who heads the congressional committee on legislative franchises, told ABS-CBN that he was surprised that the commission backtracked on its pledge. Many senators and Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra have agreed that the broadcaster could operate with a temporary license pending renewal of its franchise.

Alvarez added that the company's franchise renewal application would remain active, and the network said it will pursue efforts to reopen.

DIRECT

From Page 1

residents who have filed a 2018 or 2019 tax return to receive their stimulus checks by giving them the option to have then deposited directly into their accounts.

The CNMI on Monday received notification from the U.S. Department of Treasury and the IRS that the Commonwealth's economic impact payment implementation plan has been approved and that the funds are on its way.

"We're excited because we're able to now give all our residents that qualify for this $1,200 stimulus, one-time payment, $2,400 for a couple, as well as $500 for every qualifying child," Finance Secretary David Atalig said.

While the funds are scheduled to be released mid-May, Atalig is encouraging everyone to visit the department's stimulus fund portal at https://finance.gov.mp/stimulus/.

"This will be the quickest way for you to receive your funds in your bank account," he added. "Those that do not avail of the direct deposit will receive a paper check; however, it will be mailed out to your P.O. box address, and then you'll need to take this check to the bank and line up and then cash it or deposit it, so I encourage everyone to visit our portal."

Revenue and Taxation director Tracy D. Norita said that all the information submitted in the portal will be validated against the tax information on the tax returns, against the data on the CMMI tax system.

Norita further added that the portal is to provide service for taxpayers to submit their banking information "to help them with their physical distancing efforts."

Register to direct deposit your stimulus

To get the stimulus deposited directly into a bank account, the filer must register an account at https://finance.gov.mp/stimulus/.

Once registered, the individual will have to state the most recent year since 2018 when his or her tax return was filed, as well as the filing status, whether as a single filer or married filing jointly.

Other information that will be requested include the primary filer's name and social security number, the spouse's name (if joint) and social security number, the Adjusted Gross Income, and the filer's address or P.O. Box.

Lastly, to enable direct deposit, the filer should fill up his or her banking information, and then sign electronically.

NEW

From Page 1

lated at the Alternative Care Site at Kanoa Resort in Susupe and is under close monitoring by the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

According to a statement from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, the 17-year-old male was identified as a result of contact tracing and the community-based testing at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport.

The individual is asymptomatic—which means he does not show any symptoms of COVID-19—and was confirmed for diagnosis at the Commonwealth Health Center laboratory.

"After consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC considers this case to not be part of a new infection chain and is not considered infectious," the statement said. This means that the individual is connected to one or more of the 14 confirmed positive cases.

CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for close family members, friends, and associates.

The task force and CHCC advises the community to continue to be careful and help reduce the transmission of the virus by staying home, avoiding crowds, and continuing to practice good hygiene.

Additionally, as of May 6 a total of 1,797 individuals have gotten tested at the Saipan airport. Of that number, 1,476 have already tested negative; the results of others remain pending.

To date, there are now 15 confirmed positive cases in the CNMI, with 12 recoveries and two deaths.

COVID-19 in Guam

The Department of Public Health and Social Services on Guam tested 70 individuals for COVID-19 last May 5. All 70 tested negative.

The DPHSS overall count includes probable cases of COVID-19 and confirmed positive cases tested by the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, California, the U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, the Guam Memorial Hospital Authority, Guam Regional Medical City, the Guam National Guard, and Diagnostic Laboratory Services.

To date, there have been 149 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Guam, with five deaths and 124 who've been released from isolation.

STIMULUS

From Page 1

as possible.

This will provide up to $1,200 for each eligible individual and $2,400 for joint returns, as well as $500 for each qualifying child. Stimulus checks will be issued by direct deposit or check and mailed to the address indicated on the return, or last known address. The Department of Finance has also opened a stimulus check web portal where eligible residents can provide banking information.

This comes soon after the U.S. Department of the Treasury notified Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig on May 4, 2020, that the Internal Revenue Service has approved the CNMI's Economic Impact Payment ("or stimulus checks") Implementation Plan.

"We will be getting these checks out to our people as soon as possible," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. "In addition to protecting everyone's health, our priority is to get everyone the assistance they need, and we now have the funds to get this done."

All eligible CNMI residents—including SSA/RRB/VA/SSI beneficiaries and taxpayers with no filing requirement—must have filed either a 2018 or 2019 tax return with the CNMI Division of Revenue & Taxation to receive their stimulus check.

"To benefit immediately from this stimulus, you must file an income tax return for 2018 or 2019. We encourage all residents to file a tax return; especially, pensioners and other individuals that typically do not have a filing requirement (income amounts equal to or less than the standard deduction amount allowed). Taxpayers who have not yet filed their 2019 returns, will be substituted with their 2018 return information," said Atalig.

To assist taxpayers in social distancing efforts, the Division of Revenue & Taxation is providing a tax return drop-box at the entrance of the office for easy and fast submission of tax forms. DRT will process returns as quickly as possible to ensure all eligible taxpayers receive their EIP in a timely manner.

Taxpayers are encouraged to visit the Department of Finance website at www.dof.gov.mp/forms to access digital versions of the required tax forms. If you have any questions or concerns, you may send an email to info@dof.gov.mp and a response will be sent as soon as possible. ***(PR)***

BMV

From Page 3

all driver exams and drivers testing are postponed, and will be rescheduled until a later date.

All individuals who are looking to visit BMV and avail of the services are required to wear a mask and maintain the standard 6-foot distance when lining up and around other individuals.

We ask individuals to make payments at CNMI Treasury on Capital Hill, or Revenue and Tax in Dandan before turning in documents, as the BMV cashiers window will be closed. BMV will be accepting incoming documents and will be processing these documents for next-day pick-up.

We look forward to serving the public, and we thank you for your patience and understanding, as we look for alternative solutions for a much more streamlined process. ***(PR)***

PSS stops insurance payments for furloughed staff

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Even as the nation celebrates Teachers Appreciation Week, over 700 Public School teachers and personnel have been informed that PSS will no longer be paying for their insurance since they are now furloughed.

According to a furlough update notice from PSS dated last week, PSS is unable to make premium life and health insurance payments for their furloughed employees.

"As much as PSS wants to continue paying our furloughed employees' health and life insurance premiums, we are unable to do so," the PSS notice stated.

The ultimate reason PSS cannot make health insurance payments for their furloughed staff is because there are no earned wages to pull the payment from.

"Our Finance payroll staff is unable to book the expense as there is no employee earned wages to pull the amount out from," PSS said. "At the time a decision was made to continue paying for insurance coverages for our furloughed employees, we only looked at the humanitarian, legal, and financial aspects surrounding this action but failed to consult with our payroll staff on whether they can process the expense and payout until just recently."

Additionally, there are no local funds for PSS to even support the payments due to the economic downturn as a result of COVID-19.

"Based on the foregoing reasons, CNMI-PSS is only able to pay for furloughed employees' payroll allotments that have been earned and garnished, inclusive of government and private health life insurance premiums, up until pay period 10, or the pay period covering the days employees worked prior to being placed on furlough status [in April]," it said.

On top of not having health insurance for the time being, furloughed PSS employees were also informed that even though they are furloughed, they are not allowed to look for part-time jobs.

"While on furlough, you are still officially working for PSS. However, if an employee finds alternative employment while furloughed and does not intend to return to work at PSS, the employee will have to notify the human resource office immediately to process a resignation," PSS said.

Currently, furloughed employees were not paid for three pay periods prior to receiving their furlough notices.

US Supreme Court declines to take up Guam plebiscite case

HAGATNA, Guam (AP)—The U.S. Supreme Court announced it will not review a case that could affect the political status of Guam.

The order issued Monday means a July 2019 federal appeals court ruling will stand and Guam's native inhabitants cannot participate in a political status plebiscite, The Pacific Daily News reported.

The Guam government in December appealed a July 2019 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which said the island's political status plebiscite is race-based and violates constitutionally protected voting rights.

The non-binding vote would determine whether native inhabitants prefer statehood, free association or independence from the United States.

Guam is a U.S. colony and the results of the plebiscite could have helped shape the island's future actions involving decolonization.

The government's appeal was considered a long shot, as the Supreme Court typically agrees to consider only about 3% of appeals. The court did not issue its reasoning for rejecting the Guam case.

Guam resident Arnold Davis filed a 2011 federal lawsuit against the Guam Election Commission after the panel denied his request to register for the plebiscite because he did not meet the legal definition of a "native inhabitant."

Guam's plebiscite law defines native inhabitants as people who became U.S. citizens because of the Organic Act, which establishes U.S. territories, and their descendants.

The government argued the Ninth Circuit incorrectly held that Guam's plebiscite law is considered a "vote." The plebiscite is instead a targeted public opinion survey that does not impact public policy, the government argued.

Davis' attorneys asked the Supreme Court to reject the government's petition, saying the plebiscite is not simply a non-binding survey and would commit the government to take a position on the island's political status.

Alleged drug dealer wants to see records of some law enforcers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

An alleged methamphetamine dealer wants to see information, including Internal Affairs records, concerning law enforcers involved in his case, as part of preparation for his trial.

Joseph T. White, through counsel Joey P. San Nicolas, said in a motion filed Monday before the Superior Court that the evidence and information he is asking for is material to his defense.

Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho will hear White's motion on July 1 at 10am at the Supreme Court courtroom.

San Nicolas said disclosure of the requested information would be neither unreasonable nor oppressive to the CNMI government, but will facilitate a fair, efficient, and just disposition of the charges against White.

San Nicolas said they requested the information from the government last Oct. 17, but they have not been produced. He said they requested production of criminal record and legal status of all witnesses, Henthorn material concerning the law enforcers involved, and all field notes and briefing notes of those law enforcers.

Henthorn gives defense attorneys the right to any information in an agent's personnel record relating to dishonesty, perjury, and others that can be used to discredit an agent's testimony.

San Nicolas said they also requested materials concerning performance goals and awards for those law enforcers, any "deals" or promises made to any witness in exchange for testimony, and the reports of all scientific tests and examinations conducted in this case.

San Nicolas

Citing precedent, the defense counsel said suppression by the prosecution of evidence favorable to an accused violates due process where the evidence is material either to guilt or to punishment, irrespective of the good faith or bad faith of the prosecution.

San Nicolas said that White is entitled to all evidence of complaints filed against enforcement officers involved in this case, perjurious conduct or others like dishonesty contained in those files. He said any Internal Affairs investigation regarding this case would obviously contain potentially exculpatory information. Exculpatory refers to evidence favorable to the defendant that tends to exonerate the defendant of guilt.

The Office of the Attorney General charged White with one count of trafficking of a controlled substance for allegedly selling methamphetamine or "ice" on Feb. 1, 2019 on Saipan. White allegedly sold 0.1 gross gram of meth to the Drug Enforcement Task Force's "cooperating source" during a sting operation at a parking lot of a poker arcade in San Jose.

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
(1) Accounting Clerk
Atleast 1 yr. work experience. Proficient in various computer software, such as MS Excel, Word, Peach Tree & other Accounting Softwares.

Submit Applications To:
PAM PACIFIC ENTERPRISES CORP.
DBA Pena House Boutique and Salon
Ground Floor, Sablan Building, Chalan Kanoa
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel.# 670-235-7270

SAIPAN HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
Office of the Mayor
Municipality of Saipan

NOTICE OF REGULAR SHEFA BOARD MEETING

In accordance with 1 CMC § 9901 et seq., as amended, the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance May 7, 2020 at 9:30 am at the SHEFA Office Conference Room, 2nd Floor, CTC Building, Oleai, Beach Road, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Preliminary Matters
1. Roll Call
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Adoption of Minutes from February 27, 2020
II. Public Comment
III. Reports
1. Administrator
2. Chair
3. Committee
a. Committee on Awards
b. Committee on Appeal/Deferments/ Forbearance
c. Committee on Policy and Procedures
d. Committee on Program and Development
e. Committee of Fiscal, Legislative and Community Affairs
IV. Old Business
1. 2021 Budget Proposal
V. New Business
1. Spring 2020 Application Status
2. Program Status for Fall 2020
VI. Executive Session
VII. Misc.
VIII. Next Meeting
IX. Adjournment

Note: Meeting may continue the following day should the need arise.

PACIFIC ISLANDS CLUB SAIPAN

We are seeking for high energy individuals with a positive, can do attitude.
Pacific Islands Club, Saipan is inviting qualified, U.S. workers to apply for the following positions:

CHEF DE CUISINE
Experience in preparing multi-ethnic cuisine is required. Must be able to work weekends, holidays and flexible shifts.
CLOSING DATE: May 7, 2020

COMPUTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST
Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science. 24 months working in hospitality preferred.Able to work weekends, holidays and flexible shifts.
CLOSING DATE: May 7, 2020

Applications must be received by 5:00pm on Thursday, May 7th, 2020.
PIC applications are available at the PIC Security Desk by the Loading Dock/Employee Entrance. Incomplete applications will NOT be accepted or considered.
PIC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE
PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) is considering a request for Federal assistance from Northern Marianas College (NMC) to construct two on-campus facilities in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), EDA is conducting an assessment of the potential of the proposed project to affect the environment and/or historic properties.

The project involves construction of two new facilities on the northeast corner of the NMC campus in As Terlaje, Saipan:

The Workforce Development and Training Center would consist of a 3-story building with about 20,200 square feet of floor space and a building footprint of approximately 65 feet by 105 feet, housing classrooms, laboratories, and faculty offices.

The Center for Research, Extension, and Development would consist of a 2-story building with about 25,000 square feet of floor space and a building footprint of approximately 80 feet by 160 feet, housing laboratories, a multi-purpose room, and administrative and program offices.

Project information is available for review via e-mail request by contacting Mr. William Torres at william.torres@marianas.edu or Ms. Patricia Coleman at patricia.coleman@marianas.edu

If you have any information regarding potential impacts environmental resources or historic properties associated with this proposed project, please provide it in writing to:

Regional Environmental Officer
US Department of Commerce
Economic Development Administration
915 Second Avenue, Room 1890
Seattle, WA 98174
rdimmick@eda.gov

Comments received in the EDA Regional Office by 5:00 pm Pacific Time on May 21, 2020 will be considered. A copy of the NEPA/NHPA decisional document will be available upon request at the above EDA Regional Office.

NMHC seeks applicants for COVID-19 relief grant program

The Northern Marianas Humanities Council has announced a new grant program for CNMI-based cultural organizations and participants in humanities programming.

Torres

Pangelinan

Funding for the program is made possible by Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act allocations to the National Endowment for the Humanities. NEH allocated $242,700 to NMHC to distribute among eligible entities and individuals within the CNMI to help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant funds are intended to help organizations sustain their operations and cover fees for individual humanities scholars, experts, and practitioners who are active in projects and activities that advance the humanities.

The NMHC COVID-19 Relief Grants are for immediate relief and planned expenses over the next six months. Organizations may request up to $15,000 and individuals may request up to $10,000. The council will review applications on a rolling, first-come, first-serve basis with initial deadlines set for May 15, 2020, June 19, 2020, and July 31, 2020. Grant eligibility criteria, guidelines and an application form can be found online at www.nmhcouncil.org/COVID-19.

"The council's COVID-19 Relief Grant will help ensure our cultural organizations, scholars, and practitioners continue the important work of documenting and promoting our local traditions, history, and experiences," said Leo Pangelinan, executive director of NMHC. "The humanities covers a broad range of disciplines and those involved with its study and practice are integral to the health of our economy and democracy."

NMHC board chair Robert T. Torres said, "Our community lives on connections and contact with each other in engagement with each other through language, literacy, culture, history, discourse, literature and more. With the isolation today and for our social and emotional wellness, the Humanities serve to keep us connected with each other. This support from our federal partners will greatly help groups and individuals to maintain our libraries, cultural organizations, learning centers and continue to conduct programs and activities for our community. Please take advantage of this opportunity to be creative during COVID for each other through the Humanities."

Established in 1991 as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation, NMHC exists to develop, promote, and support programs in public humanities in the Commonwealth. Much of its funding comes from the NEH. ***(PR)***

GHOST TOWN

Despite the shortened curfew hours, which is now from 10pm to 5am, the roads of Saipan are still relatively free of traffic and people, who are still cautious about venturing out late at night. Photo shows the intersection on Middle Road going toward the Imperial Palace Saipan casino.

KRIZEL TUAZON

RELIEF DRIVE

Beneficiaries of a relief drive that the Filipino group, Bayani Association, recently held show the bags of rice they got. The group gave away 20-lb bags of rice each to 75 beneficiaries. The Bayani Association, which is under the United Filipino Organization, has been distributing care packages in the last couple of weeks to families in need. The group plans to continue handing out relief goods in the weeks to come. Those who wish to donate rice, canned goods, and butane may call 287-7563 or 285-1021. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

May 07, 1999

New takeover bid

In its continuing attempt to control CNMI's labor and immigration functions, President Clinton's special representative to the 902 talks has offered a new package of proposals that would apply U.S. laws on immigration, minimum wage and customs in the Northern Marianas. In a letter to Lt. Gov. Jesus R. Sablan, Edward B. Cohen outlined steps Washington could implement if the federal government assumes jurisdiction of the immigration and minimum wage policies of the Commonwealth. Cohen said the proposal drafted for Clinton was presented to the local government to solicit their input before it is submitted to the US Congress.

Security deposit bill hits rough waters

Despite mounting calls from the business sector, a bill easing a requirement for foreign investors to post a $100,000 security deposit appears to run into troubles in the Senate as it is still awaiting committee review more than nine months after it passed the lower house. But Sen. Juan P. Tenorio, whose committee on Resources, Economic Development and Programs has been tasked to deliberate on the measure, said they would soon come up with amendment for final voting on the floor. He did not provide specific date. He said other restrictions should be kept in place, including exempting from the proposal some businesses where abuses on their workers may still be a major problem, such as clubs, security agencies and job placement companies, as well as those hiring foreign workers.

May 07, 2005

SAIWAI hosts World Walking Day event

The Saipan Walking Association, Inc. will celebrate World Walking Day with a walking activity on May 14, Sunday. International Federation of Popular Sports, or IVV, members from the Koala Wanderers Club in Germany, led by its president Manfred Trettin, would be joining the walk, which would feature two courses—a 10-kilometer and a shorter 5-km. "The walk is celebrated by the member countries around the world in worldwide embrace in the spirit of fun, fitness, and friendship. This is another chance to make new friends from the other side of the world," said SAIWAI officer Mario Espeleta.

Garment sales slide to $49M

Garment sales declined to $49.4 million in April, the lowest in the last five months, as the CNMI's garment players struggle to win buyers' orders amid the lifting of trade quota on apparel. If nothing is done to stem the slide, the Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association said this could lead to a collapse in the garment sector, which would lead to loss of thousands of jobs, significant government revenue, and possible bank run. "Garment workers are estimated to have $90 million in direct deposits. Displaced garment workers will withdraw their monies from local banks in the CNMI," SGMA executive director Richard Pierce told businessmen during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's membership meeting Wednesday.

May 7, 2006

Defined contribution plan proposed

If enacted into law as proposed by the Fitial administration, all new public employees and eligible existing government employees would have their own "portable individual retirement accounts" on or after Jan. 1, 2007. In a bill submitted to the Legislature Friday, the administration aims to create a Northern Mariana Islands Public Employees' Defined Contribution Retirement Plan, making it the single retirement program offered by the government to its employees. The bill defines defined contribution plan "as a plan in which savings are accumulated in an individual retirement account for the exclusive benefit of the member or beneficiaries." The existing retirement program is called Defined Benefit Plan.

Good turnout at Tinian fiesta causes delay in ferry services

Ferry services coming from Tinian were delayed yesterday for 30 minutes due to hundreds of Saipan-based passengers who attended the weekend Tinian San Jose Fiesta celebrations. Staff of Tinian Shipping and Transportation Inc. told the Saipan Tribune that the two trips departing Tinian were delayed because there were so many passengers. The staff said about 30 people failed to board the scheduled 8am trip as the ferry is limited to carry only 333 passengers. Those who stayed at Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino were the priority passengers. It was first come, first served for the other passengers.

CNMI Medicaid Office resumes services to public

The CNMI State Medicaid Agency continues to assist all new and current Medicaid applicants. Social distancing and the use of masks will be strictly enforced to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The eligibility office and accounting/claims department will now be open from Monday to Friday, from 7:30am to 4:30pm.

New and returning applicants can pick up all application forms right next to the drop-box located at their office on Capital Hill or forms can be downloaded via their website at http://medicaid.cnmi.mp/index.php/sma-services/medicaid-application-forms.

All application and renewal/redetermination forms submitted must be original. Supporting documents may be submitted via fax at (670) 664-4885, email, or via the drop-box with copies attached to application forms.

In addition, be sure that all mailing addresses and contact numbers are up to date to ensure that cards are sent to the correct addresses and in the event that case workers need to contact any beneficiaries.

For more information contact:

GENERAL INFORMATION:
Frank Camacho (franklincamacho@cnmimedicaid.com)
Tel. 664-4880

ELIGIBILITY OFFICE:
Rose Benito (rositabenito@cnmimedicaid.com)
Tel. 664-4882

Ruth Pangelinan (ruthpangelinan@cnmimedicaid.com)
Tel. 664-4886

Soledad Cabrera (soledadcabrera@cnnmimedicaid.com)
Tel. 664-4887

Rita Camacho (ritacamacho@cnmimedicaid.com)
Tel. 664-4888

For Accounting/Claims Department: 664-4883/4884. Clients can also drop off claims and invoices via drop-off window located by the front entrance door on Mondays only from 8am to 3pm.

Director Helen Sablan (helen.sablan@cnmimedicaid.com)
664-4890 ***(PR)***

$151K in CARES Act funds go to resource center in Guam

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of the Interior has provided a non-profit organization in Guam with $151,550 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act emergency relief funding to prepare, prevent, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The organization, called, Mañe'lu, will use this funding, which is being made available through the Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program, to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information, assistance, and workshops during and after the pandemic to communities in Guam.

"[Interior Secretary David Bernhardt] and I are pleased to be able to provide funding support to the nonprofit organization Mañe'lu on Guam utilizing CARES Act funding," said Assistant Secretary, Insular and International Affairs, Douglas W. Domenech. "Collective and collaborative efforts among government, non-government, and local communities are necessary to keep communities on Guam strong."

Mañe'lu is a Micronesian Resource Center One Stop Shop that provides important services to support Micronesian communities in Guam, which Domenech said "is crucial during this unprecedented worldwide pandemic."

With this funding, Mañe'lu proposes to support Guam's local and migrant communities by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate information, assistance, and workshops during and after the pandemic through their *Informed Island* project. The project will work with Micronesian families to keep them informed, aware, and safe during the pandemic and help retrain and prepare those who have lost employment due to COVID-19, to re-enter the workforce. For more information about the services that Mañe'lu provides to communities on Guam, visit the website https://manelu.org/.

For more information about CARES Act funding that has been provided to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs to benefit the territories and the Freely Associated States visit https://www.doi.gov/oia/financial-assistance. For more information about other federal support to the territories and the FAS during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit www.doi.gov/oia/covid19. ***(PR)***

Takagi & Associates donates $25K for UOG research

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

From left, Takagi & Associates representatives Tsubasa Otsuka, Yuichiro Hirano, Jo Takagi, and Hidenobu "George" Takagi, and University of Guam representatives Katrina Perez, Monique Storie, Lavonne Guerrero-Meno, and Sarah Grainger.

Takagi & Associates Inc. made a $25,000 donation to the University of Guam Endowment Foundation earlier this year as the latest installment of the company's pledge of $150,000 to the university.

The gift is intended to support the Micronesian Area Research Center in various research projects, including research on Japanese immigration to Guam and a Japanese tourism study. The funds will go to designated researchers who are working on these studies and will also provide for student research assistant stipends. Takagi has previously donated an additional $45,000 toward this research.

The Richard F. Taitano Micronesian Area Research Center, formally created in 1967, contains more than 40,000 volumes or resource materials on Guam and is the engine of much historical and archaeological research in Guam and Micronesia. ***(PR)***

Guam Guard honors nurses

JOANNA DELFIN, GUAM NATIONAL GUARD

Capt. Francis Nicdao is assigned to the Guam Air National Guard's 254th Air Base Group as a clinical nurse. She is part of a unique team that manages the overall group's readiness, operations and health maintenance. In her civilian capacity, Nicdao is a registered nurse and nurse manager at a local clinic. "I joined the Air Guard for a variety of reasons both personal and professional. Joining the Air Guard allowed me to lead as a commissioned officer to serve my country as a nurse," she said.

National Nurses Week began yesterday, May 6, and will end on May 12, which is the birthday of the original founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale.

As part of this occasion the Guam National Guard recognizes the contribution nurses make to the local military and in the community. "We want to say thank you for giving of yourself to serve our island and our nation, but especially the people in our community," said the Guam National Guard in a statement yesterday. ***(PR)***

JOANNA DELFIN, GUAM NATIONAL GUARD

1st Lt. Dan Romulo is assigned to the Guam Army National Guard's medical detachment as a medical surgical nurse. In his Guam Army National Guard capacity, he serves as a case manager, providing professional case management and health promotion to all GUARNG soldiers. In his civilian capacity, he is a registered nurse with the U.S. Naval Hospital Guam's occupational health clinic. "I became an Army nurse to challenge myself. To see what I can do for the Army and what the Army can do for me in terms of developing my skills. Being an Army nurse, there are so many opportunities," said Romulo.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXX, Issue No. 90
Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
editor@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER
The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Protecting businesses and workers: Federal liability protection could be a sticking point

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has backtracked on his previous suggestion that states in financial trouble should simply go bankrupt, and now says he is "open" to considering funding for state and local governments in the next coronavirus relief bill.

That's potentially good news for governments nationwide that are looking at huge budget deficits brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the shutdown of businesses. The sharp and sudden decline in tax revenue has state and local leaders frantically trying to adjust budget projections for this year and beyond. Congress should move to provide such funding quickly.

The change of course by McConnell, however, is not without stipulations. In exchange for funding for the state government, he wants federal liability protection for businesses that reopen to guard against what he termed an "avalanche" of lawsuits. The liability protection could be a major sticking point in a funding bill, but there is ample room for compromise.

McConnell and other top Republicans, along with Trump administration officials, are backing so-called safe harbor provisions supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the pro-business lobbying group. They want some form of legal protection for all businesses against COVID-19-related lawsuits.

Opposing the move are Democratic leaders, labor unions and trial attorneys who fear that overly broad levels of protection from liability would allow business to escape accountability.

While most would agree that businesses, especially small local ones, should be protected from frivolous lawsuits related to the coronavirus pandemic, there are equal concerns about worker safety and whether companies are doing enough to protect their employees.

There is precedent for federal legislation providing liability protection. The National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act protects vaccine manufacturers from liability to encourage research, and most recently Congress agreed to limit the legal liability of manufacturers and distributors of face masks to speed production.

A complete safe harbor provision for businesses has little chance of making it through the Democratic-controlled House, but there are ways to limit liability without eliminating safeguards and lawsuits. A broad outline of safety measures that must be met before reopening, coupled with provisions for worker safety, could allow for some limited liability protections for businesses. Other possibilities are an inspection process and certification for businesses, or limits on areas of potential litigation to reduce frivolous lawsuits that would be costly for small businesses to defend.

The bottom line is that compromise will be necessary to protect not only businesses but also the workers who are needed to keep them running. If some form of business liability protection needs to be passed in order to get emergency funding for state and local governments, then congressional leaders should quickly find a middle ground.

© 2020 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

America's reopening will depend on one thing—trust

By TYLER COWEN
Bloomberg Opinion

Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University and writes for the blog Marginal Revolution. His books include Big Business: A Love Letter to an American Anti-Hero.

As America's economic reopening fitfully proceeds, it is becoming clear that it will require a precious resource often in short supply: trust. Americans are about to see a new referendum on how strong is the glue that holds them together.

Should you show up again for work? It depends how much you trust the pronouncements of your employer that the work space will be safe. Should you send your children back to school? That depends on how much you trust the school system. Should you go to that block party? It depends on much you trust your neighbors about where they've been and who they've seen.

The problem is that such trust can never be absolute. No matter how much parents like the local schools, for example, or would trust them on other issues, child-to-child transmission of COVID-19 still may occur. The risk of infection cannot be eliminated, and schools have never been world-class performers in the monitoring and control of disease.

I find that when I order takeout, I am patronizing the two local restaurants whose proprietors I know best. Yes I like their food, but I also have been impressed by their seriousness and dedication of purpose, and I trust they will undertake the necessary safety precautions. One of those restaurants serves cuisine from the Wuhan area of China, and the virus is not something they take lightly.

My preferences here might not be completely rational. But I expect many people will feel the same way: They will want to buy from people they know and respect.

The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic brought serious economic damage for thinly capitalized face-to-face retailers, such as small family-owned restaurants. But many of those same institutions will lead the recovery—that is, if they have built up trust among their patrons. If they ask me to sit outside to eat my meal, I will trust that their kitchen procedures are "clean enough," because I believe that the boss is watching.

It is also worth asking whom I do not trust. When it comes to providing a fully clean and safe store, I do not trust most of the big-box retailers. I trust them just fine in ordinary times, but no single manager can oversee the entire cleaning and disinfectant operation. And can they monitor COVID-19 in the air? If they tell me that "all possible precautions have been taken," I might believe their words, but I won't believe that is enough.

I will also remain skeptical of the airlines. Like most American travelers, I've experienced lost bags, canceled flights and inexplicable delays. I am not a complainer by nature, yet still I would classify my experience in 44 years of flying as "OK to good." I'm not afraid of a plane crash, but when it comes to risking Covid-19 exposure ... I'm going to wait a bit longer.

Not only must customers trust businesses, but businesses must also trust customers—and customers will have to trust each other. At a bare minimum, businesses have to trust their customers not to show up with visible symptoms of COVID-19, as well as trust that they haven't engaged in high-risk activities more generally. Right now many or possibly most carriers are asymptomatic, yet most businesses do not have the capacity to test customers for COVID-19, which they would want to do if the tests were reliable, which they aren't.

I've found that customers are much better and more tightly masked at my local organic supermarket, which was never so crowded anyway. The one quick inside shopping trip I did was to that venue, as much a mark of trust in the customers as in the owners.

The NBA is wondering if it can resurrect its playoffs at a dedicated location with television coverage but no audience in the stands. So far the teams are hesitant, in part because they are afraid of public resentment if the league's millionaire players have access to COVID-19 tests while the general public does not.

The reality is that if the NBA announced it was buying up a lot of tests, it would boost the supply of tests. That could provide testing with valuable positive publicity, with the NBA serving as a role model for what other businesses might do. Yet the NBA does not yet trust its fans to see things in such a positive light, and so reopening is delayed. There might be some danger to playoffs games without fans, but surely less than in, say, collegiate or professional football, where injuries and concussions are built into the very nature of the competition.

In sum: Americans are about to find out just how trusting a nation this is. We might not like everything we learn.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Coronavirus increases the dangers to a free press at home and abroad

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. *Readers may write to her at:* Philadelphia Inquirer, *P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by email at trubin@phillynews.com.*

Sunday was World Press Freedom Day, a date set by the United Nations to celebrate freedom of the press and the defense of media from attacks on their independence.

If there was ever a critical time for fact-based journalism, it surely is now—in the age of the coronavirus. Yet, the pandemic is exacerbating the many crises that threaten such journalism with extinction, not just in autocracies like China and Russia, but even in democracies like ours.

"Lamestream Media is totally CORRUPT, the Enemy of the People!" President Donald Trump tweeted Sunday, repeating a phrase honed by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin to label supposed ideological enemies who should be eliminated. (Joe Biden, in comparison, issued a statement praising journalists for "upholding free and open democracies, both at home and around the world.")

For President Trump, however, World Press Freedom Day was just another day to condemn journalists who challenge his lies and deceptions about the coronavirus.

For the rest of us, it should serve as a vital reminder that the coming few years will be pivotal for the survival of press freedom, which is threatened by a series of crises compounded by COVID-19.

The crises facing "for freely reported, independent, diverse and reliable information" are succinctly described in a new report by the organization Reporters Without Borders. "We are entering a decisive decade for journalism," says RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire. "The coronavirus pandemic illustrates the negative factors threatening the right to reliable information."

These include a Geopolitical Crisis, as COVID-19 offers authoritarian regimes a chance to impose measures on frightened publics that might otherwise cause problems. Hungary, among many examples, recently passed laws making it easier to prosecute journalists.

China (No. 177 of 180 on RSF's World Press Freedom Index) is promoting its authoritarian model worldwide as an alternative to liberal democracy—including a "new world media order" in which journalism is tightly controlled.

The pandemic shows the danger of such a model: China was able to hide the outbreak by suppressing the remaining small space for investigative journalism that existed before the crisis. Even still, independent bloggers tried to report it, and the free press of Hong Kong and Taiwan were able to report about it. Imagine if they disappeared.

Meantime, the coronavirus era amplifies the technological crisis that permits propaganda, rumors and conspiracy theories to compete unimpeded with fact-based journalism. "The pandemic has amplified the spread of rumors and fake news as quickly as the virus itself," the RSF report notes. This includes state troll armies from Russia (No. 149 in the index) and China that spread rumors that the virus was manufactured by the U.S. military.

Of course, in the United States, online conspiracy theories are promoted by tweets from the president and his avid supporters, including Fox News commentators.

Which brings us to the democratic crisis, in which leading democratic politicians "openly foment hatred of journalists." In this category, RSF cites Donald Trump and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro (No. 107), who "continue to denigrate the media." (I'd add India's Narendra Modi, and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, one of the global leaders in journalist arrests.)

This last category, I believe, is crucial. Americans may be inured to Trump's pile-on against fact-based media, but the coronavirus era reveals just how dangerous it has become. RSF ranks the United States No. 45 in press freedom, which I believe is too low. But the president's vitriol against solid reporting—already redolent of dictator language—will become increasingly dangerous as public anger grows over his dismal handling of COVID-19.

Indeed, the president is priming his base to blame "enemies" for his failures, as we have seen with his support for armed protesters in the Michigan statehouse, who were protesting guidelines set by his own scientists. This plays into the fourth crisis cited by RSF, a crisis of trust toward journalists worldwide.

Throughout the world, primed by social media and partisan politicians, the publics have grown increasingly wary of journalists in general. In the United States, according to a Pew Research Center study, Republicans trust only a handful of news outlets, including Fox News and the talk-radio programs of hosts Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh.

In this dangerous climate for the free press, COVID-19 has accelerated an economic crisis that was already decimating newspapers, as social media replaced print and ad revenue plummeted. The crisis has destroyed advertising and is accelerating the layoffs and ownership concentration that already threatened journalists' independence, not just in America, but in Europe and Asia.

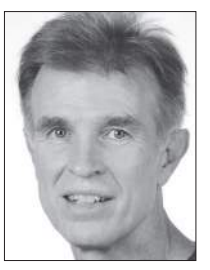
It is almost impossible to imagine what the media scene will look like one year from now, except to say that the economics of fact-based media will be even more daunting. Yet, if the COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that the republic won't survive without a free press capable of challenging lies dispensed by dishonest leaders.

The time for figuring out how to save a free press from collapsing is now.

When stubborn individualism clashes with a stubborner virus

By BILL TORPY
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Bill Torpy is a columnist for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.



There's a truism circulating the internet that aptly sums up the patchy state of self-isolation orders. It says, "Having some states lock down and some states not lock down is like having a peeing section in a swimming pool."

As a nation, our pool has many such sections, even within the regions that are supposedly locked down. The problem, of course, is the coronavirus knows no boundaries, whether they be national, state, county or city lines. And until recently, there's been a hodgepodge of such directives.

I get it. For a long while it was someone else's problem, whether it be China's or Italy's or Washington state's or even Atlanta's. Now it's pretty much everywhere and folks are, largely, coming aboard.

Last week, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp finally decided to toughen up the state's shelter-in-place guidelines. This came about as governors in Tennessee, Florida and Texas all similarly came to the same conclusion. Their simultaneous conversions came about after President Donald Trump finally conceded publicly that this mess is indeed extremely serious and 100,000 Americans will most likely die. That is, if we're lucky.

The president gave conservative governors of the South cover and they took it.

Of course, Gov. Shotgun last week decided to jack the Cluelessness Scale to 11 by uttering his instantly infamous explanation that he put his order into action because asymptomatic people with the illness "could have been infecting people before they ever felt bad. We didn't know that until the last 24 hours."

Now, it's almost certain the governor already knew that. He's not a stupid fellow, and he would have to have been living in a tent in the mountains for the past month not to know. I'm hearing that he somehow misspoke with that statement, but politicians increasingly don't ever want to admit a gaffe.

Kemp's reluctance to issue the order was due to the fact that lots of counties in Georgia, places that overwhelmingly support him, had largely escaped the virus. He was trying to balance public health efforts while not hurting people's livelihoods. It's a wrenching decision that leaders throughout the country have grappled with.

"Because if you overreach, people are going to rebel on you, basically, and not heed the warnings you're giving to them," he said a couple of weeks ago when the virus in Georgia was on low boil.

Back then, in mid-March—which seems like five years ago—Americans were much more divided on the reality of COVID-19. On March 13, the data-crunching website FiveThirtyEight compiled a series of six polls asking how Americans viewed the looming threat of the novel coronavirus. About 65% of Democrats were concerned. Only 37% of Republicans were.

But by the end of last week, that same site noted that Republicans and Democrats were equally washing their hands more frequently—about 95%. And identical portions of each party—72%—are satisfied with their state and local governments' responses to the coronavirus. So, it takes a deadly pandemic to bring populations together.

However, getting people, or more specifically, getting individuals to act in a consistent manner is something else altogether. In announcing his order, Kemp said, "If you do not comply, you are violating the law and will be facing stiff penalties."

However, police have largely arrived at gatherings and simply tried to shoo people away. At one large outdoor gathering, four Atlanta squads drove up and then sat there, blaring their sirens. That certainly creates a buzzkill for any bash.

Americans are an independent lot and don't like being told to do something. That's why "Don't Tread on Me" stickers are such popular additions to so many vehicles.

Even Dr. Carlos del Rio, the Emory infectious disease expert who'd been trying to coax Kemp to get tough, backed off a bit last week during a conference call. He has also been urging a widespread shutdown, calling it "erase April," so that health care providers can get a handle on the explosion of cases.

"We're a very individualistic country," he said. "If we all do what's best, we don't need a national order. We don't need somebody to tell us what to do."

Actually, the good doctor forgets that there are a lot of know-nothings waddling about.

I called longtime Georgia state Rep. Alan Powell, who's about as conservative as they come. He called those not abiding by stay-at-home orders "dumbasses" and "nonbelievers."

"It's just a persona of our society," said Powell, who wore a face mask to a recent legislative session and is now hunkering down in his home by Lake Hartwell in north Georgia with a freezer full of food and a shelf full of liquor.

Tough orders right now make sense, he said. "We do have an obligation to correct behavior that affects other people."

Sandy Springs City Councilman Andy Bauman, who had been critical of Kemp for not acting sooner, said, "It's silly, even dangerous, to not have the same rules of the road."

"We're not going to martial law; we're not going to round people up," he said. "Things had become so ideological. There's been such an assault on the truth and on institutions, and then when you need them, it's hard."

Bauman said that watching the president's change in tone last week may help push the country in a more unified manner. "Trump had a moment of clarity the other night," he said. "Something spooked him."

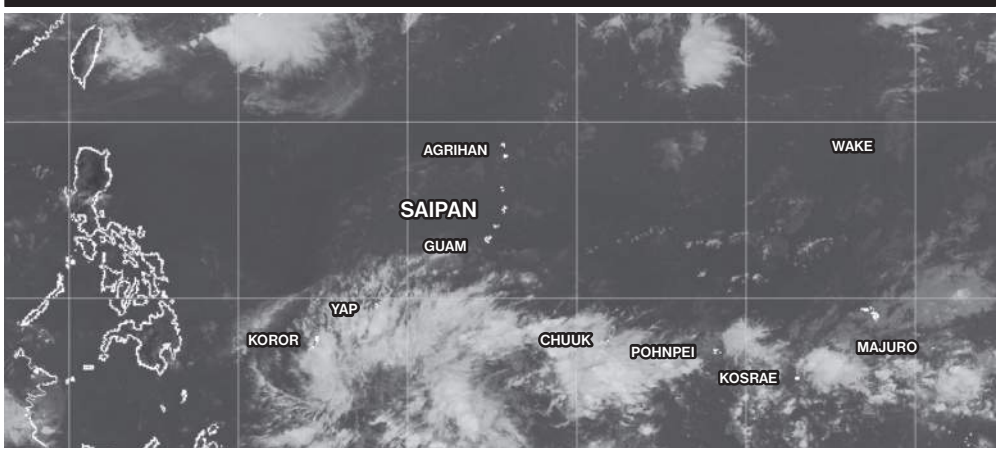
I guess he saw it's all one pool.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
88° 77°	90° 78°	90° 78°	88° 78°	89° 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:22 AM, WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows partly cloudy skies, moderate trade winds and a few light showers across the Marianas. A batch of showers is grazing the far southern waters of Guam. Seas are 4 to 6 feet from the east.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

FLIGHT SCHEDULE

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				**GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN**			
UA117	9:15am	9:55am	1, 4, 6	UA174	7:30am	8:11am	1, 4, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	89° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	64° / 55°
Beijing	Showers	64° / 52°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82° / 70°
London	Mostly Sunny	72° / 52°
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	93° / 65°
Manila	Thunderstorms	97° / 82°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	64° / 52°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	86° / 71°
New York	Partly Cloudy	66° / 47°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	73° / 57°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	73° / 52°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	66° / 61°
Rome	Sunny	70° / 48°
Salem	Sunny	74° / 50°
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	67° / 51°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	79° / 57°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	70° / 57°
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	64° / 49°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	5:51 AM	6:36 PM
Friday	5:50 AM	6:36 PM
Saturday	5:50 AM	6:36 PM
Sunday	5:49 AM	6:37 PM
Monday	5:49 AM	6:37 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	5:31 AM	6:27 PM
Friday	-	6:21 AM	7:30 PM
Saturday	-	7:13 AM	8:33 PM
Sunday	-	8:08 AM	9:34 PM
Monday	-	9:05 AM	10:33 PM

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
1:13 AM	HIGH TIDE	0.73
6:56 AM	LOW TIDE	2.19
1:47 PM	HIGH TIDE	-0.06
8:15 PM	LOW TIDE	2.12

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, *Saipan Tribune* offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769.
E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOVERNMENT RESOURCE LISTING AS OF APRIL 16, 2020

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
- ***Cashier & Customer Service***
  Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 1:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 664-4282
  Pay bills online at www.cucgov.org or via phone by calling toll free 1-(855)-729-2282

Department of Finance
- ***Division of Revenue & Taxation***
  CASHIER ONLY
  Monday - Friday
  7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
  Tel: (670) 664-1000
- ***Division of Customs Services***
  - ***Airport:*** OPEN DAILY
    8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
  - ***Seaport:*** Monday - Friday
    8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
  - ***Chalan Kanoa Post Office:***
    Monday - Friday 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
    Saturday 7:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Department of Public Lands
- CASHIER ONLY
  Monday - Thursday
  9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
  Tel: (670) 234-3751/52/53/54

Saipan Zoning Office
- *Available via phone only*
  Monday - Thursday
  7:30 AM - 11:30 AM
  Tel: (670) 234-9661/2/3
  Email: yubert.alepuyo@zoning.gov.mp
  Call or email for more information

Department of Public Works
- ***Solid Waste Management Division***
  - ***Lower Base Transfer Station & Marpi Landfill***
    Open all week except Wednesday
    7:30 AM - 1:00 PM
    Tel: (670) 322-2745

CNMI State Medicaid Agency
- Eligibility staff via phone only
  Tuesday - Thursday from 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 664-4880/4882
  Accepting applications and supporting documents via drop-box at Medicaid Office. Medicaid application & renewal/ redetermination forms must be original. Applications/forms available for pick up next to the drop-box or online at: www.medicaid.cnmi.mp

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- *Available via phone or email only on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays from*
  9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 322-6537/38
  Email: maryann@ovrgov.net

Office of the Attorney General
- ***Civil & Criminal Divisions***
  Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 237-7500/7600

Office of the Public Defender
- Monday - Friday
  9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 234-6503

SOCIAL DISTANCING TO BE IMPLEMENTED AT ALL OFFICES

GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE HOTLINE TEL: (670) 287-0046
FOLLOW US @GOVERNORCNMI FOR THE LATEST NEWS & UPDATES

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOVERNMENT RESOURCE LISTING AS OF APRIL 16, 2020

Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

- ***Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)***
  Accepting Calls From Existing Customers Only
  Tel: (670) 287-1475
- ***Division of Youth Services (DYS) On-Call***
  Saipan: (670) 285-2780 / 287-2781 / 287-1773
  Tinian: (670) 287-3268
  Rota: (670) 287-2553
- ***Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)***
  For inquiries regarding parent eligibility requirements for CCDF Program:
  Tel: (670) 783-8571 / (670) 783-8572
  Email: dccajguerrero@gmail.com / ccdf.jrosario@gmail.com
- ***Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture (CCAC)***
  For Recovery Arts Grant Application Submissions. Grant Guidelines are available at http://www.cnmiartscouncil.org
  Tel.: (670) 287-4585
  Email: parkeryobei@gmail.com
- ***Historic Preservation Office (HPO)***
  For Processing of Federal 106 Consultations Call
  Tel: (670) 789-1986
  Email: rchong.cnmihpo@gmail.com
- ***Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP)***
  Benefit Pick Up: Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

  Application Pick Up: Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 6:00 PM

  Application Submission:
  Anytime via Drop-Box

  Application Inquiries:
  Tel: (670) 237-2801/2802

  To download the NAP application and other forms go to dcca.gov.mp
  Email: support@cnminap.gov.mp

SOCIAL DISTANCING TO BE IMPLEMENTED AT ALL OFFICES

GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE HOTLINE TEL: (670) 287-0046
FOLLOW US @GOVERNORCNMI FOR THE LATEST NEWS & UPDATES

Business

American Pizza & Grill still offers buy 1 take 1 pizza

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
American Pizza & Grill has been in operation for 30 years now and is still a local and tourist favorite.

American Pizza & Grill in Garapan re-opened this week after more than a month hiatus due to COVID-19 concerns. The community can once again enjoy their two-decades old promo that everyone loves the "buy one take one pizza for free."

"The is still our rule, buy one large pizza, get a free single topping medium pizza for free. We've recently added the option to get any free appetizers instead of the free medium pizza… American Pizza & Grill was established in 1990 as Bobby Cadillac's but the owner left Saipan. We took over and retained workers and the same food," said AP&G authorized representative John Lee.

"We offer soul food that has been maintained for 30 years. Many people try our pizza, fried chicken, and burgers when they were young so there's a certain nostalgic longing for our food that is hard to replace," Lee added

Lee and management felt that re-opening American Pizza & Grill was something they owe to their employees and loyal customers. "We closed due to government restrictions arising out of COVID-19. We still are not allowed to offer dine-in service. But since we are the face of Garapan, we feel the need give hours to our workers and push forward. Closing business indefinitely is not a solution to this crisis," he said.

"We fortunately have a good ratio of local and tourist customers. Although there are currently no tourists, re-opening may not be profitable, but we feel that due to our location at the entrance of Garapan, we represent Garapan. That's the main reason we are opening—to bring a sense of normalcy in this surreal situation," he added.

American Pizza & Grill is open for take-out only, Monday to Sunday from 11:30am to 6pm. Customers can order anything on the menu and expect fresh dough and ingredients as they are prepared every day.

For more information, call (670) 233-1180 or (670) 287-5435 and visit their Facebook page: American Pizza & Grill Saipan.

IT&E extends no data caps and no late fees for postpaid subscribers

IT&E announced its subscribers will continue to enjoy no data caps until May 8, 2020. In addition, IT&E's bill payment deadline has been pushed back from the 15th of the month, so subscribers can pay their monthly bill anytime during the month and no late fees will be applied.

"We care about keeping our community connected. We know that our subscribers depend on the services we provide to educate their children with online lessons and materials, maintain businesses from home and to stay informed. Although this crisis has changed many aspects of our lives, we can carry on with what's important," said IT&E CEO Jim Oehlerking.

IT&E has lifted data caps and late fees for its postpaid subscribers since March 17, 2020.

IT&E continues to serve customers safely at its open stores and online. IT&E's current hours of operation are as follows:

GUAM

Agana Shopping Center
(Open starting Monday, May 4, 2020 for bill payments, renewals, activations, prepaid purchases and accessory purchases only)

- 8am to 9am for Manamko' Hour, Monday to Friday (aged 55 and above)
- 9am to 4pm, Mondays to Friday

Harmon

- 8am to 9am for Manamko' Hour, Monday to Friday (aged 55 and above)
- 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

AAFES

- 10am to 7pm, Monday to Sunday

Micronesia Mall and GPO stores

- closed until further notice

CNMI

- Chalan Laulau and TSL Plaza, Saipan – 7:30am to 3:30pm, Monday to Friday
- Tinian – 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday
- Rota – 8am to 4pm, Wednesday to Friday

Updates on store hours can be found at www.ite.net and on IT&E's social media pages.

For those who prefer not to visit, bill payments and inquiries can be made online at store.ite.net/onlinebilling or by phone at (671) 922-4483 [Guam]/ (670) 682-4483 [CNMI].

IT&E remains committed to helping flatten the curve of the spread of COVID-19 by supporting efforts to provide healthcare workers with personal protective equipment and other supplies and aid those impacted by the pandemic.

Organizations IT&E has supported include PPE for Guam, the University of Guam, Guam Memorial Hospital, Guam Regional Medical City, and Mane'lu. The missions of these organizations range from providing healthcare workers with personal protective equipment, giving students access to the internet and providing migrant communities with important information in their own language. ***(PR)***

IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

BOH offers online small-dollar emergency loans

HONOLULU, Hawaii—Bank of Hawaii is now offering online small-dollar emergency loans to consumers facing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 situation.

As a form of financial relief to help individuals and families cover emergency living essentials, Bank of Hawaii is offering the community a special small-dollar emergency personal loan, which include:

- Loan amounts up to $3,000
- Loan term of 40 months
- No payments for the first four months
- Low fixed interest rate of 3.0%
- Loan fee is waived

» Loans up to $3,000; low rate, no fee

"So many people in our community are already experiencing income shortfalls, and Bank of Hawaii wanted to make acquiring a personal loan simple and easy for those already drastically affected," said Peter Ho, chairman, CEO, and president of Bank of Hawaii. "We hope these small-dollar loans will help provide a safe and affordable alternative to get through this difficult period."

For ease and convenience, Bank of Hawaii is accepting applications for its online small-dollar emergency loan program at: https://www.boh.com/covidassist. With the exception of applicants in Saipan and Palau, please do not drop off applications at a BOH branch, as the bank continues to practice social distancing for the safety of the entire community. ***(PR)***

The Bank of Hawaii branch at Spring Plaza in Gualo Rai, Saipan. KRIZEL TUAZON

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
23,883.09	2,868.44	8,809.12
+133.33	+25.70	+98.41
0.56%	0.90%	1.13%

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.5515	Hong Kong Dollar	7.7518	Russian Ruble	73.2659
British Pound	0.8037	Indian Rupee	75.0672	Singapore Dollar	1.4161
Canadian Dollar	1.4036	Japanese Yen	106.3290	South Korean Won	1196.41
Chinese Yuan	6.9756	Malaysian Ringgit	4.2566	Swiss Franc	0.9726
Euro	0.9224	New Zealand Dollar	1.6474	Taiwan Dollar	29.3797
		Philippine Peso	49.4818	Thailand Baht	32.3850

Nation

US infection rate rising outside New York as states open up

Take the New York metropolitan area's progress against the coronavirus out of the equation and the numbers show the rest of the U.S. is moving in the wrong direction, with the known infection rate rising even as states move to lift their lockdowns, an Associated Press analysis found Tuesday.

New confirmed infections per day in the U.S. exceed 20,000, and deaths per day are well over 1,000, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University. And public health officials warn that the failure to flatten the curve and drive down the infection rate in places could lead to many more deaths—perhaps tens of thousands—as people are allowed to venture out and businesses reopen.

"Make no mistakes: This virus is still circulating in our community, perhaps even more now than in previous weeks" said Linda Ochs, director of the Health Department in Shawnee County, Kansas.

AP

Store manager Natalie Hijazi temporarily closes off the entrance to a Pet Fair store inside The Woodlands Mall to help meet the current occupancy limits in place Tuesday, May 5, 2020, in The Woodlands, Texas.

Elsewhere around the world, Britain's official coronavirus death toll, at more than 29,000, topped that of Italy to become the highest in Europe and second-highest in the world behind the United States. The official number of dead worldwide surpassed a quarter-million, by Johns Hopkins' count, though the true toll is believed to be much higher.

The densely packed New York metropolitan area, consisting of about 20 million people across a region that encompasses the city's northern suburbs, Long Island and northern New Jersey, has been the hardest-hit corner of the country, accounting for at least one-third of the nation's 70,000 deaths.

When the still locked-down area is included, new infections in the U.S. appear to be declining, according to the AP analysis. It found that the five-day rolling average for new cases has decreased from 9.3 per 100,000 people three weeks ago on April 13 to 8.6 on Monday.

But subtracting the New York area from the analysis changes the story. Without it, the rate of new cases in the U.S. increased over the same period from 6.2 per 100,000 people to 7.5.

While the daily number of new deaths in the New York area has declined markedly in recent weeks, it has essentially plateaued in the rest of the U.S. Without greater New York, the rolling five-day average for new deaths per 500,000 people dropped slightly from 1.86 on April 20th to 1.82 on Monday.

U.S. testing for the virus has been expanded, and that has probably contributed to the increasing rate of confirmed infections. But it doesn't explain the entire increase, said Dr. Zuo-Feng Zhang, a public health researcher at the University of California at Los Angeles.

"This increase is not because of testing. It's a real increase," he said.

Pockets of America far from New York City are seeing ominous trends.

Deaths in Iowa surged to a new daily high of 19 on Tuesday, and 730 workers at a single Tyson Foods pork plant tested positive. On Monday, Shawnee County, home to Topeka, Kansas, reported a doubling of cases from last week on the same day that business restrictions began to ease.

Gallup, New Mexico, is under a strict lockdown until Thursday because of an outbreak, with guarded roadblocks to prevent travel in and out and a ban on more than two people in a vehicle. Authorities have deployed water tankers, hospital space is running short, and a high school gym is now a recuperation center with 60 oxygen-supplied beds.

On Monday, a model from the University of Washington nearly doubled its projection of COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. to around 134,000 through early August, with a range of 95,000 to nearly 243,000.

Dr. Christopher Murray, director of the institute that created the projections, said the increase is largely because most states are expected to ease restrictions by next week.

Without stay-at-home orders and similar measures, Murray said, "we would have had exponential growth, much larger epidemics and deaths in staggering numbers." But cooperation is waning, with cellphone location data showing people are getting out more, even before their states reopen, he said.

Whistleblower: US failed to prepare, sought quick virus fix

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Trump administration failed to prepare for the onslaught of the coronavirus, then sought a quick fix by trying to rush an unproven drug to patients, a senior government scientist alleged in a whistleblower complaint Tuesday.

Dr. Rick Bright, former director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, alleges he was reassigned to a lesser role because he resisted political pressure to allow widespread use of hydroxychloroquine, a malaria drug pushed by President Donald Trump. He said the Trump administration wanted to "flood" hot spots in New York and New Jersey with the drug.

"I witnessed government leadership rushing blindly into a potentially dangerous situation by bringing in a non-FDA approved chloroquine from Pakistan and India, from facilities that had never been approved by the FDA," Bright said Tuesday on a call with reporters. "Their eagerness to push blindly forward without sufficient data to put this drug into the hands of Americans was alarming to me and my fellow scientists."

Bright filed the complaint with the Office of Special Counsel, a government agency that investigates retaliation against federal employees who uncover problems. He wants his job back and a full investigation.

The Department of Health and Human Services issued a terse statement saying that Bright was transferred to the National Institutes of Health to work on coronavirus testing, a crucial assignment. "We are deeply disappointed that he has not shown up to work on behalf of the American people and lead on this critical endeavor," HHS spokeswoman Caitlin Oakley said.

According HHS, Bright has not reported to his new post. But his spokeswoman said that Bright is on sick leave, following his doctor's orders, and that HHS has provided him no details on his new role.

Bright's complaint comes as the Trump administration faces criticism over its response to the pandemic, including testing and supplies of ventilators, masks and other equipment to stem the spread. There have been nearly 1.2 million confirmed cases in the United States and more than 70,000 deaths.

Bright said his superiors repeatedly rejected his warnings that the virus would spread in the U.S., missing an early opportunity to stock up on protective masks for first responders. He said he "acted with urgency" to address the growing spread of COVID-19—the disease the virus causes—after the World Health Organization issued a warning in January.

Watchdog concerned over Census Bureau's vetting of workers

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Almost 300 people working for the U.S. Census Bureau last year had "major" issues with their background checks and a lack of vetting oversight could pose risk to the public and the agency as it hires and deploys hundreds of thousands of census takers for the 2020 census, according to a watchdog report released last week.

About 70 of the workers deemed to have "major" issues were in the field last fall, verifying addresses ahead of the once-a-decade head count of the U.S. More than a dozen other workers with some kind of derogatory information in their background checks had access to Census Bureau facilities and information systems, and they included employees working in positions deemed "critical" and "high risk," according to the report from the Office of Inspector General.

"Due to the lack of oversight of its background check program, the Bureau cannot reliably attest to the suitability of its decennial workforce—increasing the risk of exposing the public, the Bureau's systems and facilities, and its employees to individuals who have not been properly vetted," the Office of Inspector General said in a management alert sent to the bureau.

Some 10,000 background checks for employees and contractors haven't been evaluated, some dating back to 2014, the watchdog office said.

In a statement, the Census Bureau said the backlog of the almost 300 major cases had fallen to 200 cases, and the remaining cases will be evaluated by mid-June.

"When we hire U.S. Census Bureau staff, we are mindful of two critical objectives. Most importantly, we want to protect the public's safety and trust. Secondly, we want to give every applicant who is fit to serve a fair opportunity to do so," the statement said. "When an issue turns out to be serious, we terminate employment."

Job candidates hired by the Census Bureau can start working while officials with another agency, the Office of Personnel Management, conduct background checks on them. If a red flag is found, it's categorized as minor, moderate, substantial or major. Once the background checks are finished, they are sent back to the Census Bureau for decisions on the candidates' suitability, according to the Inspector General's report.

Office of Personnel Management guidelines say a decision should be made within three months.

The Census Bureau needs to hire up to 500,000 temporary census takers to knock on the doors of homes where people haven't yet answered the questionnaire for the 2020 census. That doesn't start until August after the coronavirus pandemic forced a delay from a May start. As of two weeks ago, more than 41,600 temporary workers were on the payroll, the bureau reported Tuesday.

Asia

South Korea has low daily increase as sports resume

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea on Tuesday reported its lowest daily increase in coronavirus cases since Feb. 18, as the country restarts professional sports and prepares to reopen schools.

South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported three new infections and two more virus-related deaths, bringing the totals to 10,804 cases and 254 fatalities.

After reporting around 500 new cases daily in early March, infections have slowed over the past month amid tightened border controls and waning transmissions in the worst-hit city of Daegu, which reported zero new cases on Tuesday.

Health authorities remain concerned about a broader "quiet spread" and plan antibody tests to learn how widespread the virus is.

Officials have relaxed social distancing guidelines and decided to reopen schools in phased steps, starting with high school seniors on May 13.

The professional baseball league began its season Tuesday with pictures depicting fans filling vacant seats and cheers from the dugout easily heard in the quiet stadium. The pro soccer league will kick off under similar conditions on Friday.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

AUSTRALIA SUSPECTS MARKET ORIGIN: Australia's prime minister still suspects the coronavirus originated in a Chinese wildlife market despite U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo advocating a theory that it began in a laboratory. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he has written to Group of 20 government leaders calling for a "proper assessment" of the origin of and government responses to the pandemic. Pompeo has contended without offering proof that the virus began in the Wuhan Institute of Virology. China has dismissed calls for an independent inquiry.

SRI LANKA ALLOWS STRANDED TO LEAVE: Hundreds of people stranded in Sri Lanka's capital by a blanket curfew have been allowed to return to their homes. Police spokesman Jaliya Senarathna said 500 were selected from among the thousands stranded with priority given to pregnant women, mothers with small children and people with prolonged sicknesses. They must undergo a 14-day quarantine when they reach their homes. The curfew imposed on March 20 bans non-essential travel, but stranded people have been urging the government to allow them to return home. Colombo is among the hardest-hit places in the country. Sri Lanka has counted 755 cases and on Monday, the death toll rose to eight.

DUTERTE APOLOGIZES: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte apologized to two tycoons he once threatened to arrest and thanked them for helping in the coronavirus pandemic, which he says "humbled me." The president asked Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala and Manuel Pangilinan for forgiveness. Both have arranged financial aid for thousands of their employees and helped the government deal with the contagion. Before the pandemic, Duterte had alleged their water concession contracts violated anti-graft laws and accused them of economic sabotage. The water utility companies denied any wrongdoing. Duterte's administration has scrambled to finance aid for poor Filipinos he fears may starve under a lockdown to fight the coronavirus, which has infected nearly 10,000 people and killed 623.

SINGLE CASE IN CHINA: China reported only a single new case of coronavirus and no new deaths, marking three weeks since it recorded a COVID-19 fatality. The National Health Commission said 395 people remained under treatment in hospitals, while 949 people were under isolation and observation. China has recorded 4,633 deaths from the virus among 82,881 cases, but travel restrictions, testing, quarantining and case tracing policies appear to have stemmed the virus's spread.

HONG KONG RELAXES MEASURES: Hong Kong will relax some social distancing measures, allowing businesses such as gyms, cinemas and beauty salons to reopen and doubling the number of people allowed at public gatherings to a maximum of eight. Businesses must continue to observe social distancing measures, Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam said Tuesday. For example, cinemas are not allowed to fill all of their seats and restaurants must continue to space tables at least five feet apart and provide hand sanitizer to customers. Schools will begin resuming May 27, with students in the more senior grades returning first.

AIR TRAVEL PLANS: The leaders of Australia and New Zealand say they're committed to resuming travel between their countries as soon as they can do so safely. The announcement came after New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern took the unusual step of joining her Australian counterpart Scott Morrison and his Cabinet for a discussion by video link. "It is still some time away," Morrison said of the travel plans. "But it is important to flag it because it is part of the road back." Both countries have lowered their caseloads with strict lockdowns. Ardern said both countries would benefit, after 1.2 million New Zealanders visited Australia last year and 1.6 million Australians visited New Zealand.

PAKISTANIS ALLOWED TO GO HOME: About 200 Pakistanis stranded in India's coronavirus lockdown have been able to go home. Border security forces allowed the Pakistanis, wearing masks and riding in private vehicles, to cross the Attari-Wagah border that separates the sprawling Punjab region between Indian and Pakistan. The border opened Tuesday for the first time since the lockdown began. Also in India, authorities in New Delhi imposed a 70% tax on liquor purchases to avoid huge gatherings a day after thirsty drinkers formed long lines at stores across the country, ignoring social distancing guidelines.

BOOZE RETURNS: Businesses have been told to prepare safety plans before pubs, restaurants and other businesses reopen in the booziest part of Australia. The Northern Territory has the highest rate of alcohol consumption per capita and is on track to become the first to reopen bars since a national lockdown began March 23. When they reopen in the territory May 15, alcohol can only be served with food and patrons can't linger more than two hours. The sparsely populated Northern Territory has recorded 30 cases of COVID-19 and no fatalities. A former Northern Territory government leader once described drinking alcohol as a "core social value."

World

UK overtakes Italy with most official virus deaths in Europe

LONDON (AP)—Britain now has Europe's highest official coronavirus death toll after the latest round of daily figures Tuesday showed it overtaking Italy. Only the United States has recorded more virus-related deaths.

AP

Members of the clinical staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment PPE care for a patient with coronavirus in the intensive care unit at the Royal Papworth Hospital in Cambridge, England, Tuesday May 5, 2020.

The British government said another 693 people died in hospitals, nursing homes and other settings after testing positive for COVID-19, taking the total to 29,427—above Italy's 29,315.

Though the U.K.'s coronavirus-related death toll, when measured on a seven-day rolling basis, has been falling consistently for the past three to four weeks, the country is around two weeks behind Italy in terms of the pandemic. The tallies are likely underestimates because they do not include suspected coronavirus deaths.

Taking into account countries' populations, the U.K.'s per capita death rate is below those in Italy, Spain and Belgium. And the U.S. is below them all even though it has the highest number of registered COVID-19 deaths with more than 70,000.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the number of deaths was a "massive tragedy," but added that it was too soon to make reliable international comparisons, partly because of apparent differences in the way countries report deaths.

"I don't think we'll get a real verdict on how well countries have done until the pandemic is over and particularly until we've got comprehensive international data on all-cause mortality," he said.

There is a growing consensus among scientists and statisticians that the best way to assess deaths eventually will be to measure how many more people died than would normally have been expected to die in any particular year.

Professor David Spiegelhalter, a leading statistician at the University of Cambridge, said one certain thing is that all the official death numbers are "substantial underestimates" of those dying directly from the virus and those who died as a result of the epidemic and the measures taken in response.

"I think we can safely say that none of these countries are doing well, but this is not (the) Eurovision (Song Contest) and it is pointless to try and rank them," he said.

France, Tunisia urge UN council to adopt COVID-19 resolution

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—France and Tunisia urged the U.N. Security Council on Tuesday to adopt a resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire in major conflicts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic after weeks of contentious negotiations that have paralyzed the United Nations' most powerful body.

France, one of five veto-wielding permanent council members, and Tunisia, one of 10 elected members, melded their rival resolutions in hopes of winning approval for the first council resolution since COVID-19 started circling the globe. But diplomats say a vote has been held up primarily over a dispute between the United States and China on including a reference to the World Health Organization.

President Donald Trump suspended funding to WHO in early April, accusing the U.N. health agency of failing to stop the virus from spreading when it first surfaced in China, saying it "must be held accountable," and accusing WHO of parroting Beijing.

China strongly supports WHO and is insisting that its role in calling for global action on COVID-19 be included in any resolution, diplomats say, while the U.S. insists on a reference to "transparency" on COVID-19 and no mention of the WHO.

Ambassadors from the 15 council nations met privately Tuesday on the French-Tunisian draft resolution and France's U.N. Ambassador Nicolas de Riviere said later it was "a good discussion."

"France and Tunisia are working hard on it, things are moving forward," he said. "The Security Council must act now."

Tunisia's U.N. Ambassador Kais Kabtani told several journalists that the two countries are working "very hard to present a final package deal" and are relying "on the spirit of compromise from the council members."

At the meeting, he said, "Tunisia highlighted the urgency of concluding the ongoing consultations process on the draft resolution on COVID-19 in the next few days"

"It's a moment of truth for the United Nations and the multilateral system which faces the most difficult crisis the U.N. has been confronted with since World War II," Kabtani said.

The 193-member U.N. General Assembly approved two resolutions on COVID-19 in April.

One recognizes "the unprecedented effects" of the pandemic and calls for "intensified international cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat" the new coronavirus. The other urges global action to rapidly scale up development, manufacturing and access to medicine, vaccines and medical equipment to confront the pandemic.

General Assembly resolutions reflect the opinion of governments around the world but are not legally binding. By contrast, Security Council resolutions are legally binding.

Environment

Pandemic hasn't slowed python captures even with fewer hunters on the prowl

Python hunter Donna Kalil caught a 13-foot snake in the Everglades last week as the invasive species continues to do serious damage to local wildlife.

COURTESY DONNA KALIL/ MIAMI HERALD/TNS

By ADRIANA BRASILEIRO
MIAMI HERALD

MIAMI—With fewer python hunters working in South Florida during the coronavirus lockdown, one likely consequence could be fewer snakes captured over the past couple of months.

That's not been the case.

The giant invasive constrictors are everywhere, devouring mammals in the Everglades and showing up in new places where they have been easy pickings for veteran wranglers like Donna Kalil, the first woman to be hired by state-sponsored programs to eliminate the snakes.

"We may be in lockdown but the pythons are still out there, eating our wildlife, reproducing and expanding their range very quickly," Kalil, who wears a trademark pink shirt on all hunts, said from a location in Everglades National Park where she was hunting on Tuesday.

State-hired python hunters, a job that only exists in Florida, are designated essential workers and have been allowed to move in and out of state lands to look for snakes even during statewide stay-at-home orders.

Still, Kalil said she hasn't gone hunting as much over the past month to respect public health rules to slow the spread of COVID-19, but also because it's been difficult to find volunteers to go along on her hours-long road cruising trips. But the times she did go on hunts recently have been productive.

Last week she got lucky and found an egg-bearing female measuring 14 feet, which will fetch a bonus from the state-sponsored programs that pay hunters $50 for each python measuring up to four feet plus $25 more for each additional foot, and an additional $200 for a nesting female. Kalil said she hasn't noticed changes in behavior because of the lockdown, but said she found snakes in places where they are usually hard to spot.

The number of snakes caught in March this year dropped to 10 compared with 16 last year, according to the South Florida Water Management District. But in April, the numbers from the district are actually up: 55 compared with 46 in the same month last year. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which also manages a python removal program, didn't reply to requests for recent python data.

Pythons are breeding during this time of year, which means that snakes tend to be hiding in inaccessible places, and captures traditionally drop. But scoring a female with eggs is a double victory: more cash for the hunter and at least a dozen fewer voracious snakes eating marsh rabbits and wading bird eggs in the fragile ecosystem.

Finding "honey holes" is something Tom Rahill has been doing in the Everglades during the coronavirus crisis. Rahill, a longtime python hunter and founder of Swamp Apes, an organization that takes war veterans to the Everglades to catch pythons to ease combat trauma, is one of the few hardcore hunters still cruising around dirt roads or exploring the marshes by canoe.

"The best thing about being in the Everglades now, when things are more quiet, is we can spot new hunting grounds more easily," Rahill said. He's been going out alone, respecting social-distancing rules, to map out places where he plans to take veterans once quarantine restrictions are lifted. He won't say where the new spots are. "There is a lot of competition."

Burmese pythons pose a serious threat to the Everglades ecosystem, as they can easily move around the marshes and tree islands, where they find plenty of food all year round. For nearly two decades, these voracious snakes have been successful at reproducing in the wetlands because they have no predators. Females can lay up to 100 eggs a year.

Wildlife managers believe they first arrived in South Florida as pets, and were released in the Everglades three decades ago, where they found the perfect home. By some estimates there are currently as many as 300,000 roaming the Everglades.

Since 2017, the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have been paying registered hunters to help control the population.

Not much has changed in python hunting practices during the pandemic, and social distancing was already the norm for most agents who work alone or with one partner at the most. With fewer hunters road-cruising, pythons have probably gone on roads more often to bask after cooler nights, said Michael Kirkland, an invasive animal biologist at the Water Management District.

"We probably had fewer people going out especially at the beginning of quarantine last month, but now we see activity picking up again," he said. And there are other factors to consider, too, like an earlier breeding season and drier conditions, which help hunters spot the pythons.

One thing that changed for hunters is that the COVID-19 pandemic has shut down weighing stations at state and federal lands. That's where hunters take their catch to be measured and fitted with a unique ID so the same snake isn't counted twice. It's a crucial step to calculate compensation for the hunter. Now, python measuring and recording is being done during live video chats with the district and FWC officials.

Kalil's 14-footer female is currently in her freezer, waiting for the video call to be scheduled, she said.

"While it's harder to find them when they are breeding, it's a good time to make an extra effort and find these females, which are worth so much more when the goal is to remove as many snakes as possible."

COVID-19 is a dress rehearsal for entrepreneurial approaches to climate change

As the U.S. struggles to control the COVID-19 pandemic, some experts have suggested that we can learn something about how to address climate change from this crisis.

Climate and social policy experts are recommending green stimulus packages to restart the economy. As a professor of sustainability and entrepreneurship, I see COVID-19 bringing the predicted future human health implications of climate change to horrifying life. Like COVID-19, climate change could increase respiratory illness and strain infrastructure.

However, just as with COVID-19, entrepreneurship can offer solutions to these challenges.

Searching for a solution

Saving small businesses is a central part of recovering from the pandemic. At the same time, entrepreneurs are innovating to preserve their business and help address the challenges of COVID-19.

The same thing is already happening with climate change. When entrepreneurs offer solutions that create simultaneous ecological and economic benefits, it is called "environmental entrepreneurship." My research shows that such entrepreneurship happens in three ways.

First, successful environmental entrepreneurs tend to see themselves as both environmentalists and businesspeople. Because of this, they often recruit investors, employees and customers from a broader group than traditional startups. Some offer a hope of reducing carbon emissions through new technologies. Others are small business heroes, creating jobs and building new industries.

Second, environmental entrepreneurs are attuned to different signals than large firms are.

While they are encouraged by environmentalist beliefs, we have also found that the importance of family can predict the number of environmental entrepreneurs in a state. Our research shows that solar energy companies are more likely to form in states that value not only the environment, but also family relationships.

Further, while large firms tend to respond to government-driven policy and economic indicators, environmental entrepreneurs respond to more subtle signals, such as local values. In the green building industry, environmental entrepreneurs ignore economic indicators, but are encouraged by local beliefs and activism. In short, they move first, taking on risk before the evidence is in.

Third, environmental entrepreneurs make a difference. We looked at the effect of various policies, activism and business practices on the adoption of new technologies like green building and renewable energy. We then divided the U.S. into more politically conservative and liberal regions to see whether policies, activism or business practices mattered more under different norms.

We found that the only consistent factor that increased green building adoption in both types of political environments was the number of environmental entrepreneurs. These findings suggest that when a critical mass of entrepreneurship occurs, the political divide on climate change fades away, and we see a rapid uptick in adoption of environmentally beneficial practices.

Climate conclusions

A variety of proposals before Congress would encourage a green recovery by focusing on policy to simultaneously address climate change and the recession, but these plans will likely become mired in the political debate that entangled the Green New Deal.

Here's what I'd suggest. Laser-focus on the creation of new small businesses as a way to rebuild, offering consulting, technical training and tax incentives.

By focusing on new ventures, those on both sides of the political aisle can rebuild an economy focused on long-term environmental sustainability and economic stability. ***(AP)***

Life & Style

Radcliffe, Beckham to read first 'Harry Potter' fantasy book

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Celebrities including Daniel Radcliffe, David Beckham and Dakota Fanning will take part in chapter-by-chapter readings of J.K. Rowling's first "Harry Potter" book.

Rowling's Wizarding World announced Tuesday on Twitter that all 17 chapters of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" will be read in a series of free videos and audio recordings. The readings of the beloved fantasy story is part of the Harry Potter at Home series.

Stephen Fry, Claudia Kim, Noma Dumezweni and Eddie Redmayne are expected to narrate chapters.

Radcliffe, who starred as Harry Potter in the films, kicked off the series. He read the first chapter "The Boy Who Lived," which is posted on harrypotterathome.com.

Other videos will be posted weekly on the website. Audio-only versions will be available for free on Spotify.

HBO doc puts spotlight on Natalie Wood's life, not her death

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The fate of "Natalie Wood: What Remains Behind" hung on a Robert Wagner interview. Director Laurent Bouzereau knew that it would be a delicate conversation. If it didn't work, there would be no documentary. So they filmed it first.

"If there was nothing interesting in it or something that just didn't feel right, we were not going to proceed with the film," Bouzereau said.

With his stepdaughter Natasha Gregson Wagner in the interviewer's chair, Wagner sat for two days to tell the story of life with his wife—their highs and lows, their first marriage, their second marriage and how it came to an end with her tragic death in the waters off Southern California at 43.

"We didn't want to do something that was just a love letter," said Gregson Wagner, who also produced the film. "We really wanted to portray her and all of her humanity. Obviously we had to deal with that night and we had to deal with the controversy around it."

And they did in a conversation that is humane, candid and emotional, which curious audiences can see for themselves when the film airs on HBO at 9 p.m. EDT. But while the lingering fascination around Wood's death might draw you in, it's everything else that'll keep you glued to the television.

"If you don't know Natalie Wood and you don't love Natalie Wood, then you don't love Hollywood. You don't love movies," said Bouzereau, who also directed the documentary "Five Came Back."

This Jan. 27, 2020 file photo shows Natasha Gregson Wagner, daughter of the late actress Natalie Wood, left, and director Laurent Bouzereau posing for a portrait to promote their documentary "Natalie Wood: What Remains Behind" during the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. AP

Disney profit sinks amid shuttered parks, movies and sports events

NEW YORK (AP)—The House of Mouse is struggling amid the coronavirus pandemic. Disney reported a steep decline in profit as many segments of its media and entertainment offerings ground to a standstill.

Its second quarter profit dropped 91% to $475 million, down from $5.4 billion a year earlier. Overall, the company said costs related to COVID-19 cut Disney's pretax profit by $1.4 billion.

One bright spot was its Disney Plus streaming service, which debuted in November in the U.S. and rolled out to the UK and other parts of Europe in April. As of May 4, the company said Disney Plus had 54.5 million subscribers. Netflix, by contrast, has 183 million subscribers worldwide, a base it has spent years building.

Court overturns Quincy Jones' win in Michael Jackson lawsuit

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A California appeals court on Tuesday overturned most of a 2017 jury verdict awarding Quincy Jones $9.4 million in royalties and fees from the Michael Jackson estate over the use of Jones-produced Jackson hits in the concert film "This Is It" and two Cirque du Soleil shows.

The state's 2nd District Court of Appeal ruled that the jury misinterpreted a contract that was the judge's job to interpret anyway. It took away $6.9 million that jurors had said MJJ Productions owed Jones for his work on "Billie Jean," "Thriller," and more of Jackson's biggest hits.

The appeals court found that the jury wrongly granted Jones money from licensing fees, wrongly went beyond the 10% royalty rate Jones was owed for record sales, and incorrectly granted Jones money for remixes of Jackson's master recordings.

Selena Gomez cooks up summer series for upcoming HBO Max

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Selena Gomez will put her quarantine cooking skills on display in a 10-episode series for the upcoming streaming service HBO Max.

The actress and singer, who said she's been spending more time in the kitchen during the coronavirus pandemic, also is an executive producer for the untitled project, HBO Max said Tuesday.

"I've always been very vocal about my love of food. I think I've been asked hundreds of times in interviews if I had another career, what would I do and I've answered that it would be fun to be a chef," Gomez said in a statement. "I definitely don't have the formal training though! Like many of us while being home I find myself cooking more and experimenting in the kitchen."

She will be joined remotely in each episode by a different master chef to cook and chat about kitchen tips. Food charities will be highlighted by the show, HBO Max said.

WarnerMedia's new streaming service is scheduled to debut May 27, with Gomez's series set to air this summer. A release date wasn't announced.

Teen chafes under dad's strict style of parenting

DEAR ABBY: I am a teenage girl in an average family. I started getting interested in LGBTQ+ and other social justice topics when I was in fifth grade.

Since then, I have realized that, among other things, I'm a lesbian, a liberal and an atheist. This wouldn't be a problem, but my father hates many of the things I am or stand for. He's an extremely conservative, Christian, gun-rights person, and he wants me and my brothers to join the military. He constantly pushes me to be the best that I can be, and I try, but his idea of "best" is very different from mine.

I have several mental problems, which resulted in me getting special privileges in school. I use them whenever I can, but it is never enough for him. He keeps searching through my grade book until he finds something new for me to do, regardless of the date it was assigned or whether it can be graded anymore.

I have various restrictions on my use of technology, so I can barely contact my friends. It has gotten to the point that I am worried about when I come out and looking forward to college just so I can get away. Please tell me what to do in the meantime because college is five years away.

WAITING IN VIRGINIA

DEAR WAITING: You and your dad have very different outlooks on life, and that's OK. That said, you must live under his roof for the next five years, so be diplomatic and keep some of your opinions to yourself as long as possible.

You may think your father is heavy-handed in parenting you, but has it occurred to you that when he goes through your grade book, he's trying to make sure you know how to work all the problems in it? Placing restrictions on a minor's use of technology is intelligent parenting, at least for someone just entering her teens. Please try to cut him some slack. Recognize there is a bright future ahead of you if you concentrate on your studies to the best of your ability and buckle down now.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My 32-year-old son, "Jerry," wanted to propose to his girlfriend, but didn't have money for a ring. My husband offered him my original engagement ring, assuming for some reason (or maybe just not thinking) that my old ring didn't hold sentimental value to me, although I wore that 1/3-carat diamond every day for 32 years before getting a new, larger one.

After the ring was offered, I felt forced to let him have it. I knew it wouldn't fit his girlfriend, and I also didn't think she would settle for such a small diamond, but I figured he would have the diamond put into a setting that fit her. I got over my feeling of loss knowing he would use the ring.

Well, he didn't. He gave her MY ring, and then they went out and charged a nice-sized engagement ring that she selected. My original ring now hangs on a chain in her jewelry box. Should I ask for my ring back?

MEANS A LOT IN TEXAS

DEAR MEANS A LOT: Because your first engagement ring is not being used as intended and was only a place holder until your son's fiancee got what she really wanted, I see no reason why you shouldn't ask, and I also see no reason why she shouldn't graciously comply.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

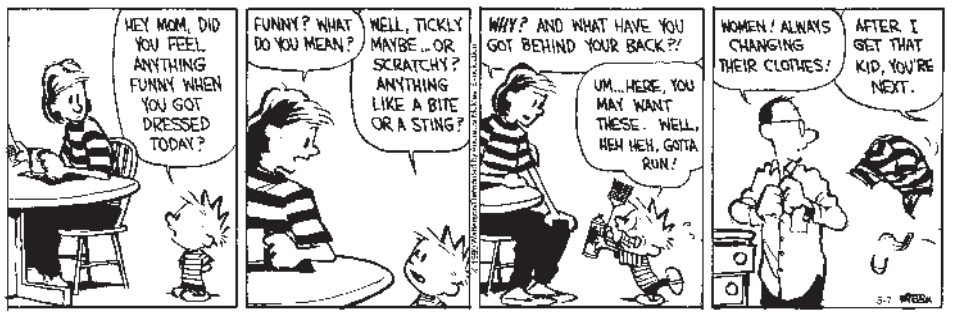
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $16 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HEY MOM, DID YOU FEEL ANYTHING FUNNY WHEN YOU GOT DRESSED TODAY?
FUNNY? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, TICKLY MAYBE...OR SCRATCHY? ANYTHING LIKE A BITE OR A STING?
WHY? AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT BEHIND YOUR BACK?!
UM...HERE, YOU MAY WANT THESE. WELL, HEH HEH, GOTTA RUN!
WOMEN! ALWAYS CHANGING THEIR CLOTHES!
AFTER I GET THAT KID, YOU'RE NEXT.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

I THINK DAD HAS A BOOK IDEA.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
HE'S BEEN IN THERE NODDING AND SAYING "MM-HM, MM-HM" TO HIMSELF FOR THIRTY MINUTES.
OH, NO. THE "MM-HM" PHASE CAN LAST FOR DAYS.
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THE "OHBOYOHBOY" PHASE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

BECAUSE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING, THIS LATE-NIGHT HOST DOESN'T HAVE HIS STUDIO AUDIENCE BEING TOLD TO LAUGH AT HIS DUMB JOKES. LET'S GIVE IT A TRY.
HAW HAHA HA HAW! HRHE... SNORT HA! HAW HA!
THAT'S HARDER THAN IT LOOKS.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Sub shop
5 Jungfrau, for one
8 Salon jobs
12 Store sign
13 Homer's cry
14 Humpty's perch
15 Boxing arbiters
16 Flamenco cheer
17 "That's — ask"
18 Thing in a shower
20 Most ironic
22 Genetic letters
23 Gerund ending
24 Actor Reynolds
27 Promo on a website
32 Docs' org.
33 Director Ang
34 Blackbird
35 Pre-television age
38 Tosses in
39 Hostel
40 Slugger's stat
42 Venus, to Serena
45 Bates of "Psycho"
49 Silver salmon
50 Log chopper
52 Take the bait
53 "Closer" actor Clive
54 Refusals
55 Military group
56 Hit with a stun gun
57 Lean- — (sheds)
58 Gels

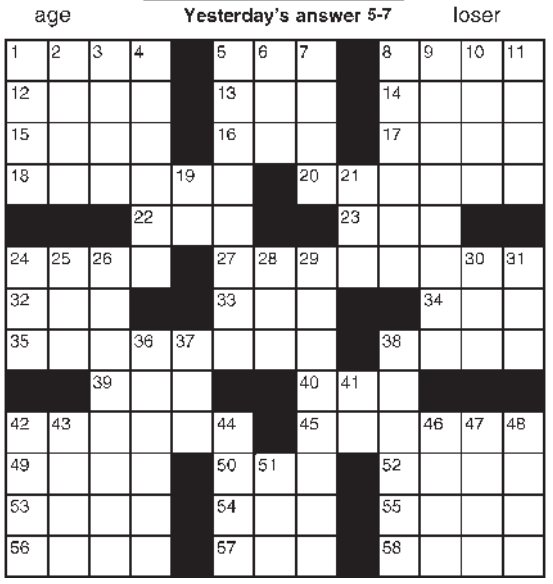
DOWN

1 Campus digs
2 Duel tool
3 Departed
4 Magazine extra
5 Super-cute
6 Texter's chuckle
7 "Close one!"
8 Johnson, aka "The Rock"
9 Jodie Foster or Maya Lin, e.g.
10 Building wings
11 Thin cut
19 Atop
21 — Tin Tin
24 Happy hour venue
25 Ms. Thurman
26 Crunchy salad veggies
28 — Lingus
29 Proximity
30 Moreover
31 Insult, slangily
36 Chant
37 Inseparable
38 Boeing rival
41 Little — Peep
42 Highlander
43 Hawk-eyes' home
44 Harangue
46 Coal source
47 Bickering
48 Tennis barriers
51 Tic-tac-toe loser

Solution time: 24 mins.

J	E	T	■	F	E	Z	■	C	B	E	R	
E	D	N	A	■	A	R	■	R	O	P	E	
B	E	D	L	I	N	E	N	■	O	X	E	N
T	A	S	E	P	■	■	C	O	O	L	E	D
■	■	■	S	K	I	S	■	G	N	L	■	■
C	U	B	E	■	S	O	A	P	■	N	A	P
A	K	A	■	T	E	N	S	E	■	C	H	A
W	E	B	■	F	E	A	T	■	S	H	A	D
■	■	Y	O	L	■	R	■	O	T	■	■	■
B	E	L	U	G	A	■	■	T	R	E	N	D
A	L	O	T	■	B	R	U	C	E	L	E	E
L	■	V	E	■	B	U	S	■	E	L	A	L
D	E	E	R	■	A	B	S	■	P	A	R	T

Yesterday's answer 5-7



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Alexander Ludwig, 28; Sydney Leroux, 30; Breckin Meyer, 46; Amy Heckerling, 66.

Happy Birthday: Well-developed relationships and work ethics will lead to welcome prospects. Do whatever it takes to position yourself for the future. Pick up skills, keep up with technology and do your best to get along with others. Honesty and integrity will play in your favor when vying to get ahead of the stiff competition you face. Your numbers are 3, 10, 17, 24, 32, 46, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Work toward a goal. Negotiate, close a deal and alter the way you do things at home and at work. A change of plans shouldn't throw you off course. Make adjustments, and keep moving forward. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Think for yourself. As soon as you let someone make decisions for you, it will lead to disappointment. A partnership adjustment will be necessary if you have lost equilibrium that you once had. Fairness should be first and foremost. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Consider what everyone else says before you respond. A proposition may lack excitement, but it can still be right for you. Heading in a lucrative direction will help to stabilize your life financially and give you wiggle room to rethink alternative options. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Take over and do your thing. You have plenty to offer and should not wait for someone else to step into a position you want. A change to the way you handle others and the help you provide will assist you in getting ahead. 5 stars

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Breathe deeply. Don't let drama set in and make you look bad. Spend more time worrying about yourself and the way you feel and look. Don't let a domestic situation crush your productivity or your ability to be reasonable and resourceful. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Keep everything in perspective when dealing with affairs of the heart. Honesty, integrity and loyalty should be top priorities when dealing with others. A change to the way you do things or how you see situations is in your best interest. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Firm up and get moving. If you waffle, you will end up missing out. Trust in your ability to follow through and make things happen. As long as you don't rely on others, you have nothing to fear. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Get back to basics. Reconnect with someone from your past. Expand your interests, knowledge and plans to include things you've always wanted to try. Partner or collaborate with someone who brings out the best in you. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Be honest; if you send mixed signals, you will end up having to backtrack. Offer what's yours to give. Present who you are, what you have and what you are looking for with unfiltered truthfulness. Play fair. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Size up situations, and proceed with caution. Gather information, and study your position before you make a move. Preparation and organization will make a difference when it comes to what you achieve. A frank discussion is encouraged. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Don't put up with being treated poorly. Know when to say no. Do your own thing, and control your happiness. Standing up for what you want will help you gain respect. Romance is in the stars. Offer peace, not discord. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Money matters. Don't squander or invest in something that won't benefit you directly. Expand your skills, be diverse and focus on exploring lucrative avenues that will have long-term paybacks. A gift or financial gain is within reach. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are intelligent, confident and steadfast. You are traditional and helpful.

Visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	6		8	2			1	
7			1			9		8
					9		7	
1	9					3		
8								6
		2					9	4
	8		7					
9		6			4			7
	2			9	8		4	

Difficulty Level ★★★

5/07

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	7	1	2	3	5	8	4	6
3	2	4	1	6	8	9	7	5
6	5	8	7	9	4	1	3	2
8	6	9	3	5	7	2	1	4
7	4	3	8	1	2	5	6	9
2	1	5	9	4	6	7	8	3
5	9	6	4	8	1	3	2	7
1	3	7	6	2	9	4	5	8
4	8	2	5	7	3	6	9	1

Difficulty Level ★★★

©2012 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

PAYING BILLS ONLINE — Solution: 9 letters

C	K	E	T	A	R	E	G	I	S	T	E	R	C	T
O	P	C	R	B	U	S	I	N	E	S	S	O	R	R
D	R	T	A	B	L	E	T	V	S	T	M	A	E	A
E	E	V	H	R	D	A	T	E	I	P	N	T	D	N
L	P	V	C	L	T	A	C	S	U	S	I	I	I	S
I	A	I	I	I	C	O	O	T	A	S	G	S	T	F
B	Y	S	B	C	R	P	E	C	B	I	K	R	T	E
O	T	E	E	P	E	R	T	E	T	C	A	S	H	R
M	D	P	T	D	U	I	W	S	E	R	V	I	C	E
E	T	H	T	N	O	A	L	H	I	S	T	O	R	Y
S	E	O	T	N	U	O	C	C	A	R	E	T	N	E
S	G	N	I	R	A	O	L	K	R	O	W	T	E	N
A	D	E	M	D	E	R	M	O	N	T	H	A	L	O
G	U	T	E	X	T	L	G	A	T	A	D	Y	R	M
E	B	M	O	R	T	G	A	G	E	L	B	A	C	D

© 2020 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 5/7

Accept, Account, Alert, Amount, Budget, Business, Cable, Cash, Chart, Checks, Code, Computer, Credit, Data, Date, Debit, Deposit, Device, Digit, Draw, Enter, Grant, History, Invest, List, Load, Message, Mobile, Money, Month, Mortgage, Network, Phone, Prepay, Process, Rate, Register, Service, Tablet, Text, Time, Track, Transaction, Transfer, Website

Yesterday's Answer: Leadership

The NEW **Treasury 39** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

76ers preparing for playoffs vs Celtics

PHILADELPHIA—We don't yet know if the 2019-20 NBA season will resume, but if it does and the rest of the regular season is scrapped, the first round of the playoffs would feature another showdown between the Boston Celtics and Philadelphia 76ers.

The Sixers, like every other team, have been busy preparing for the possibility of a return to game action. In fact, 76ers general manager Elton Brand told reporters on a conference call Tuesday that his team has done a "deep dive" on potential playoff opponents, including the Celtics.

"We're talking about the Celtics as if that could be an opponent," Brand said, as transcribed by Sixers Wire. "Brett (Brown) and his staff have also prepared for other teams in case there is a regular season and odds change, but we have done a deep dive."

The 76ers have largely disappointed this season and currently occupy the No. 6 seed in the Eastern Conference playoff race despite being a popular preseason pick to reach the NBA Finals. Brand is hoping the Sixers will have a chance to prove themselves in the playoffs, but not at the expense of health and safety amid the outbreak of COVID-19.

"As a fan, I want to see it, I want to see this team in the playoffs," Brand said. "I've said it many times. That is what we're built for so I want to see that, but I know it's going to be based on the data, the safety, and health of not just us, but of our community, but we are preparing as if we are going to go to the playoffs and play the Celtics."

The Sixers and Celtics already played their four regular season meetings and Philadelphia won three of those games. The most recent matchup came in January at TD Garden, where the C's earned a convincing 116-95 win over the 76ers despite not having star point guard Kemba Walker due to injury.

Simmons nears return

Ben Simmons is closer to getting cleared to play, should the NBA season resume.

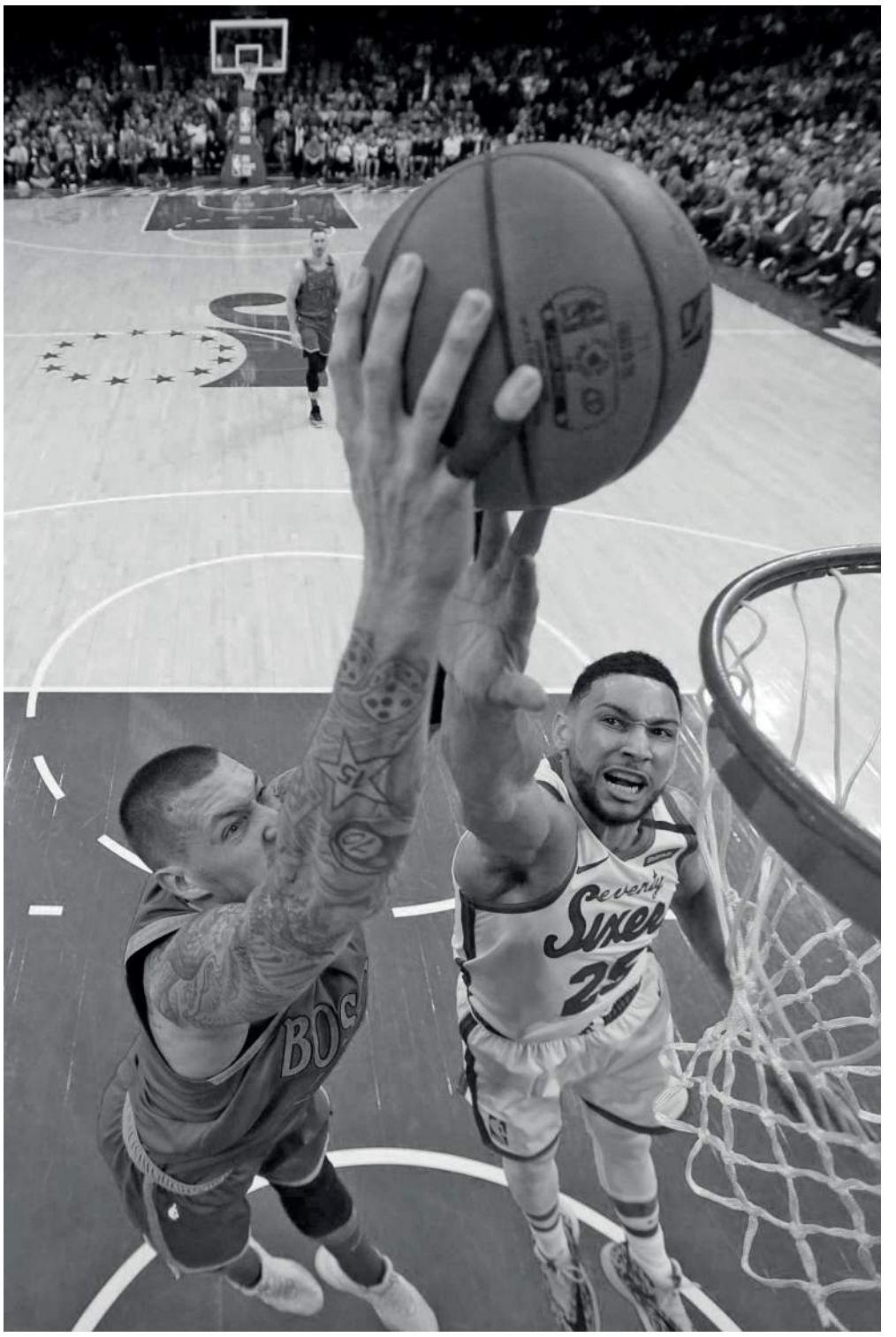
The league leader in steals was sidelined with nerve issues in his lower back when the season was suspended on March 11 because of the coronavirus pandemic. He is allowed to rehabilitate at the 76ers' practice facility in Camden, New Jersey, but there seemed to be no guarantee he would have been cleared to play in time for a playoff run.

"We've took our time, we've been methodical and thoughtful about his recovery and rehab, just to make sure, because we weren't in a rush," Brand said Tuesday. "It's hard to speculate. He's been working hard and I know he'd be close or ready."

Simmons had missed his eighth straight game and was receiving daily treatment for his nerve impingement at the time the season stopped. Brand, speaking to media for the first time since, said he would not speculate on Simmons' availability had the Sixers still been playing in the postseason. Simmons had yet to play 3-on-3 or 5-on-5 during his rehab.

"When I FaceTime him during his workouts and his treatments and I see him, I'd be highly encouraged," Brand said. "His ramp-up would be different."

The 23-year-old Simmons averaged 16.7 points, 7.8 rebounds and 8.2 assists in 54 games.



AP

In this Jan. 9, 2020 file photo, Boston Celtics' Daniel Theis, left, goes up to dunk against Philadelphia 76ers' Ben Simmons during the first half of an NBA game in Philadelphia.

He and other players undergoing rehab, including All-Star center Joel Embiid, have permission to use the 76ers' practice facility. Embiid was recovering from surgery on his left hand and had just returned after missing five games with a sprained left shoulder at the time of the shutdown.

"He's asking about when his trainer can come in," Brand said. "I wouldn't bet against him. He's going to be ready and ramped up."

The Sixers have a skeleton staff on hand at the facility when players need rehab, usually a physical trainer or a strength coach, and never more than about six people at a time.

Entering a season with NBA championship expectations, the Sixers (39-26) were a disappointing sixth in the Eastern Conference and coach Brett Brown's job status was a hot topic in Philly. Brown, whose contract runs through 2021-22, may have gained some more time to fix the Sixers because of the shutdown.

Practice facilities to reopen Friday

The NBA told teams that it's still on track to allow for practice facilities to reopen Friday in states where stay-at-home measures have been removed or relaxed.

Players will have access to facilities on an individual basis, provided they follow extensive health and sanitation guidelines.

The NBA has been suspended since March 11 when Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert tested positive for COVID-19. Facilities closed a week later.

League officials, both with the NBA and teams, said last week that the opening of team facilities was not a signal that games are on the horizon.

The NBA remains hopeful that it can finish the remainder of the regular season and hold a postseason that could extend deep into the summer. ***(NBC/AP)***

Jordan: Thomas would've affected Dream Team's harmony

CHICAGO—Isaiah Thomas remains the most controversial exclusion from the Dream Team.

Even decades after the 1992 Olympics, Michael Jordan is still explaining it.

Thomas was a reasonable omission on merit. He wasn't as accomplished as the players—Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Jordan—who made it on career achievements. On a sharp decline from his peak, Thomas was also no longer clearly better than the players who made it on current ability.

Thomas also would've been a reasonable inclusion on merit. He was close in both categories—career accomplishments and current ability. Nobody would've blinked if the combination elevated Thomas onto the team.

But everyone clearly wanted to accommodate Jordan, the NBA's golden boy. And Jordan loathed (loathes) the Bad Boys Pistons after their battles with his Bulls. So, it's hard to believe politics didn't factor in keeping Thomas—a marginal choice—off the roster.

"I respect Isaiah Thomas' talent. To me, the best point guard of all-time is Magic Johnson, and right behind him is Isaiah Thomas. No matter how much I hate him, I respect his game," Jordan said in The Last Dance documentary.

"The Dream Team, based on the environment and the camaraderie that happed on that team, it was best harmony. Would Isaiah have made a different feeling on that team? Yes," he added.

That's high praise from Jordan, especially considering Jordan's animosity toward Thomas. It's also too strong.

People would definitely rank Stephen Curry ahead of Thomas. Curry has more MVPs (two to zero) and championships (three to two) than Thomas. This isn't the first time Jordan slighted Curry.

And that's before getting into more controversial selections like Chris Paul (who has been more effective than Thomas on both ends of the floor but hasn't matched Thomas' deep-playoff accomplishments) and John Stockton (whose peak wasn't quite as high as Thomas' but had a far longer prime). They would be ranked both ahead of Thomas.

As far as the Dream Team.

Thomas was a fierce competitor who went hard at his opponents. He was interested in beating, not befriending.

But you know else fit that description? Jordan, Johnson, Bird… practically everyone on the Dream Team. Like the rest, Thomas could be affable in certain environments.

Change any member of a 12-person group, and the dynamic changes. The players got along great at the 1992 Olympics. It's hard to imagine it going much better.

But if Thomas were included, it probably wouldn't have gone much differently, either.

Meanwhile, Jordan's ruthless approach to practice has become the stuff of myth since his playing days. The Last Dance is offering us a tangible window on that side of Jordan—a window that is apparently going to blow open with the release of Episodes 7 and 8.

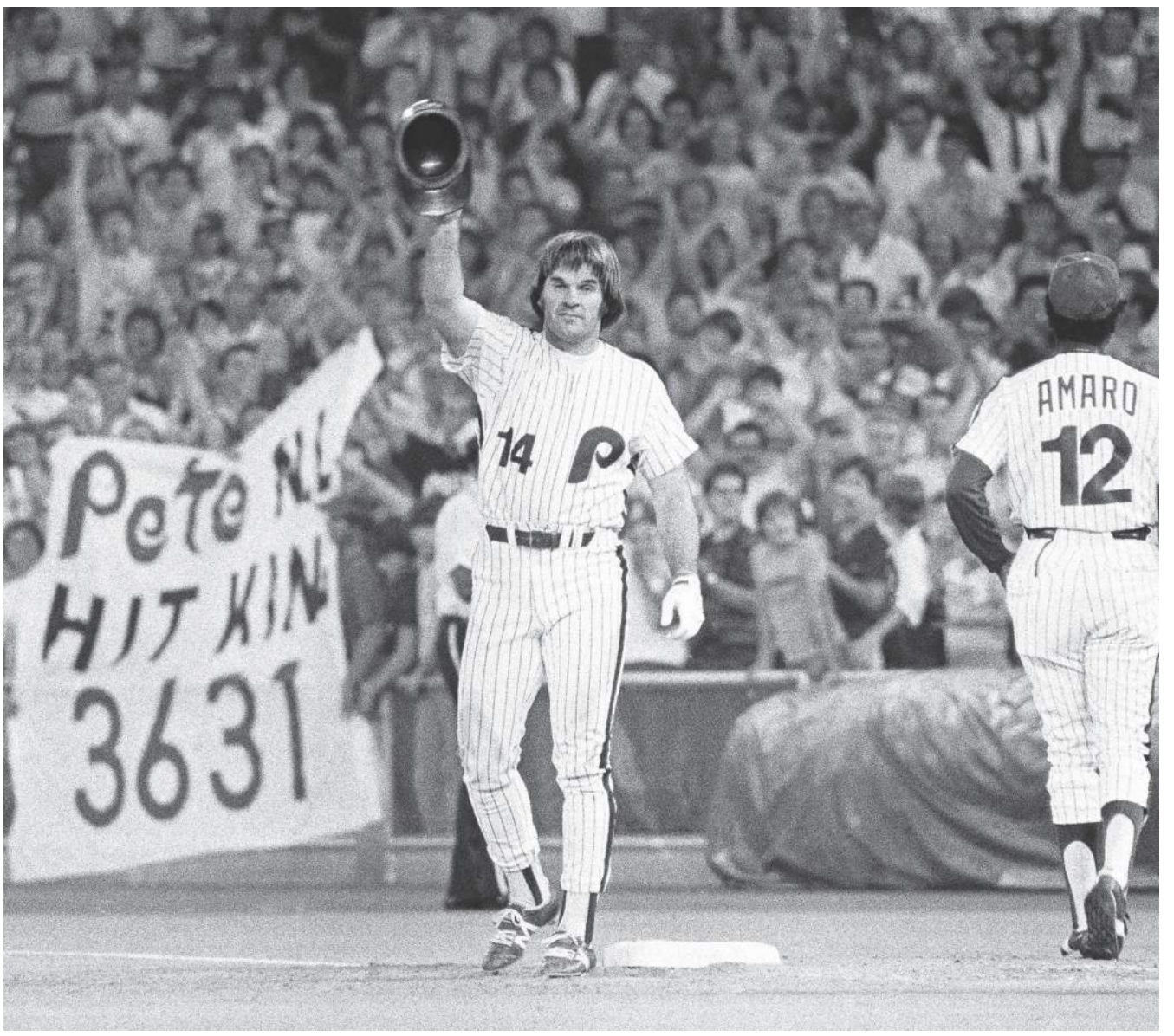
On the most recent episode of the Bulls Talk Podcast, Jason Caffey told Jason Goff that those famed Bulls practices, which were often more arduous than games themselves, saved his life.

"It was all Michael to be honest with you. He led everything," Caffey told Goff. "Every day for two-and-a-half years I never seen this man miss practice or take any time off from practice. He truly believed that if you win at it hard in practice every day, the game would just be a rollover of the situation in practice."

"And it was just that ethic that he instilled in me that actually saved my life because after my downfalls I was like, What am I going to do next? I'm hurting from this, I'm hurting from that. Well, do what you always do, push hard like Michael Jordan taught you to, and that got me back on my feet, got me back to owning businesses, got me back financially stable. So I credit all that to him," Caffey added.

Credit should be granted to Caffey, as well, who pulled himself up from humble and adverse beginnings in Mobile, Alabama to parlay a decorated high school career at Davidson into a productive eight-year tenure in the NBA. He spent his first two-and-a-half seasons in Chicago, where he won two NBA titles as a reserve power forward.

MLB stars shine in 1981 shortened season



AP

In this August 11, 1981 file photo, the Philadelphia Phillies' Pete Rose waves his hat in acknowledging the fans cheers after he made his 3,631st career hit to break Stan Musial's NL record during a game against St. Louis in Philadelphia. Rose admitted to having "goose bumps" while the fans gave him a thunderous ovation.

NEW YORK (AP)—The season began with Fernandomania and ended with a classic World Series matchup between the Dodgers and Yankees. Mike Schmidt slugged his way to a second consecutive MVP, and Nolan Ryan pitched another no-hitter.

But perhaps the best way to describe baseball in 1981 is by recounting Pete Rose's pursuit of the National League's career hits record. He tied the mark in June, then had to wait until August to break it—because a strike shut down the sport for about two months.

All Rose could do was make regular visits to the batting cage while he waited.

"I went there every freaking day," Rose said.

If baseball is able to come back at all this year, fans should be prepared for a significantly shortened season, and that 1981 campaign may be the most relevant comparison available. The season was split in two by a labor dispute, but when the sport finally returned, its stars still had an abbreviated chance to shine.

"The chaos, the change, the uniqueness, the intensity -- all of those elements absolutely factor into how memorable that entire time is," said Steve Rogers, the right-hander whose Montreal Expos made their first postseason appearance in 1981.

The early days of the '81 season were dominated by Fernando Valenzuela. The Mexican rookie took Los Angeles by storm, winning his first eight starts for the Dodgers and throwing shutouts in five of them.

By the time the strike began, Rose was in the spotlight. He was with the defending champion Phillies then, and on June 10, he entered Philadelphia's last game before the strike needing one hit to tie Stan Musial's NL mark of 3,630.

Ryan was on the mound against the Phillies, and Rose tied the record with a first-inning single off him. Then Rose struck out in his next three chances against the Houston right-hander. He finally broke the record Aug. 10 against St. Louis, in his team's first game back.

Baseball's first big event after the stoppage was the All-Star Game in Cleveland on Aug. 9. Schmidt homered in the eighth inning to give the NL a 5-4 win.

"That would have been my overall best year had we played a full season," Schmidt said in an email. "I was in the midst of my prime, especially following 1980. It really had nothing to do with a unique thing I did during the strike, actually I worked for CBS as a sports anchor. I did some working out with (Phillies reliever) Tug McGraw."

Schmidt hit .316 with 31 home runs in 102 games. Baseball-Reference.com credits him with 7.7 wins above replacement that year. In 2019—with a full season—only two NL players reached that WAR total.

If baseball's return went smoothly for position players like Rose and Schmidt, pitchers faced more of a challenge. And Rogers had the added responsibility of being on the union's negotiating committee during the strike.

"My ability to stay in shape had been curtailed pretty significantly," Rogers said. "I really did not have the capability of throwing that much."

It would nonetheless turn into a memorable year for Rogers and the Expos. Baseball expanded its postseason, allowing the four division leaders from before the strike to qualify—and also taking the teams with the best post-strike records in each division.

That led to some unusual results. Cincinnati went 66-42 for the best overall record in the game, but the Reds finished second in both halves and missed the playoffs. Kansas City went 50-53 but won the second half in the AL West and played on.

Teams played an unequal number of games. The Expos (30-23) edged the Cardinals (29-23) atop the NL East in the second half, securing what would be their lone postseason berth in Montreal.

The Milwaukee Brewers made their first playoff appearance, as well. Houston made the postseason with the help of Ryan's fifth no-hitter, Sept. 26 against the Dodgers.

The Expos fired manager Dick Williams late in the season, then went 16-11 under Jim Fanning to make the playoffs. Rogers threw a two-hit shutout against the Mets in his final start of the regular season—and he was just getting started.

In the first round of the playoffs, Rogers beat Steve Carlton twice, including in the winner-take-all fifth game at Philadelphia. He went the distance in that 3-0 victory and even drove in two runs.

In the NL Championship Series against Los Angeles, Rogers threw another complete game in a Game 3 win, but when he came on in relief in Game 5, Rick Monday homered in the top of the ninth to give the Dodgers the pennant. The ending was disappointing, but it had been a remarkable run for the Expos.

By the time the World Series ended—with the Dodgers winning in six games -- it was fair to say the 1981 season, while far from ideal, had avoided becoming a farce.

That's the challenge the sport faces this year amid the coronavirus pandemic, which has put the entire season in jeopardy. If baseball does resume, it may be in front of empty stadiums, and if the start is delayed well into the summer, the season could be so short the results seem tarnished.

"Is it really going to be a true champion?" Rose wondered. "The commissioner—boy, he's got his work cut out for him. You can't make everybody happy."

Ultimately, though, the format of baseball's return may be a secondary concern. If the sport can be played safely, that would be a victory in itself. Whether that's really possible is still very much in doubt.

"How would you contact trace if a player got the virus and was in a clubhouse? Point being, I think the number of games is a moot point," Schmidt said.

Koepka: Fall Masters could see winning score near even par

NEW YORK—Brooks Koepka is eager to see what a fall Masters might look like, even though he expects conditions to be tougher than usual near the end of the year at Augusta National Golf Club.

They typical azalea bloom of April will be replaced this year by fall foliage, with what is usually the season's first major now taking the final slot, Nov. 12-15. It will include a learning curve for all involved, even for a player like Koepka, who finished second a year ago behind Tiger Woods.

"I don't think any of us know what to expect," Koepka said Tuesday.

Koepka raised a litany of questions, ranging from whether the course will be overseeded to the potential length of any rough. But after posting a total of 12 under a year ago, he expects much tougher scoring this fall.

Among the factors raising the difficulty could be the wind. According to Koepka, players can expect the prevailing winds to come from a different direction in the fall, which could make Nos. 13 and 15 more difficult to reach in two.

"It's going to be so cold. Balls aren't going to be flying as far," Koepka said. "Every par-5 basically plays into the wind from what I've been told. It's going to change the golf course. I think you'll see scores around even par instead of that 12, 15 under that you've been accustomed to. And I think it could really affect the back nine."

Since 1990, the winning score at Augusta National has dipped below 5 under par just once. That was back in 2007, when cold temperatures and windy conditions led to high scores and Zach Johnson slipped into a green jacket after shooting 1-over 289. The last time even won the Masters was 1966, when Jack Nicklaus became the first player to successfully defend.

US courses reopening

In Miami, U.S. golf industry leaders unveiled a three-stage plan Tuesday to reopen courses with safety protocols in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Almost all states permit or are set to allow golf courses to reopen with social distancing and other measures aimed at avoiding the spread of the deadly virus over more than 16,000 layouts.

The "Back2Golf" program, supported by the PGA and LPGA Tours plus the US Golf Association and PGA of America, also has the backing of US course owners and superintendents and club managers.

"While we recognize there's no perfect solution and various areas of the country will progress in these phases at a different pace, it's imperative that we reopen golf in a way that prioritizes the health and well being of the entire golf community," PGA of America chief executive Seth Waugh said.

The stages follow guidelines for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including social distancing and greater sanitization protocols, and allow for differing stages in different areas as city and state regulations allow activity.

Stage one allows for no more than 10 people in a single area, with players distancing from each other while walking or going solo in golf carts with those in vulnerable groups not participating.

Lock excited for Elway's endorsement

DENVER (AP)—At least in one sense it's been an ideal offseason for Drew Lock.

Broncos GM John Elway declared the second-year passer his established starter. Then, he went out and added old hands and fast feet in the kind of offensive makeover quarterbacks ordinarily can only dream about.

"I'm super pumped about the guys we've added," Lock said Tuesday in a Zoom call from his parents' home in Lee's Summit, Missouri, where he's been staying and training during the coronavirus pandemic.

Elway's two biggest free agent acquisitions were running back Melvin Gordon and guard Graham Glasgow.

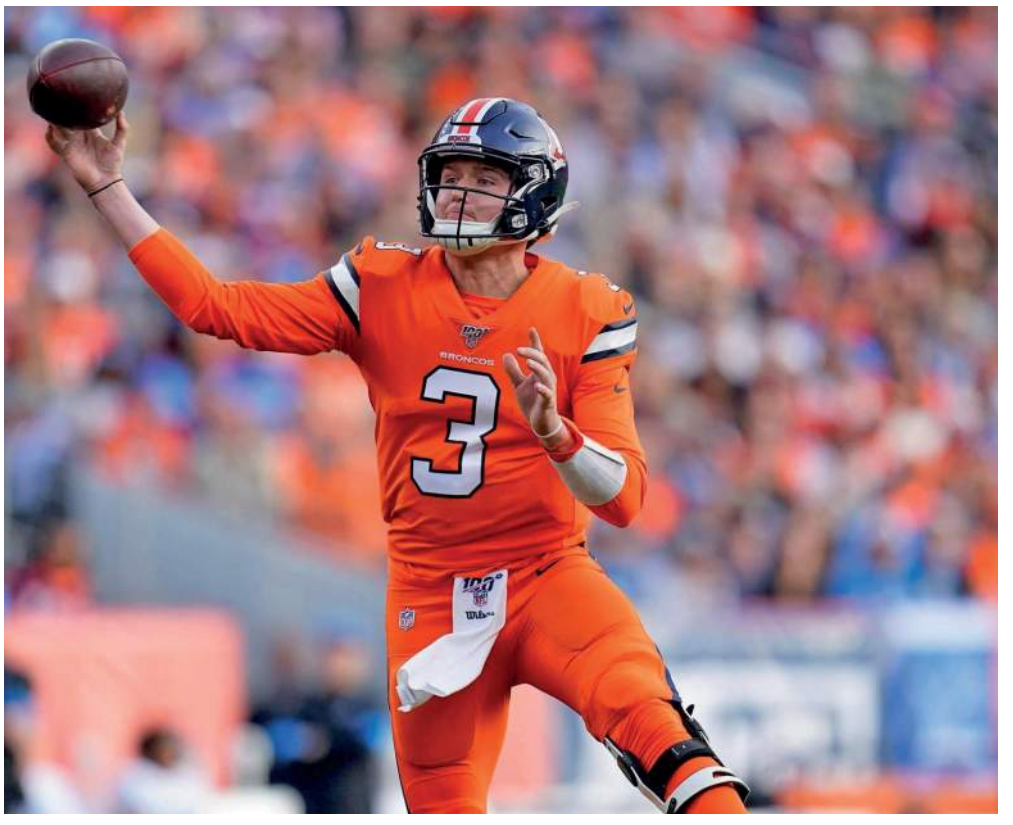
The Broncos selected a trio of receivers in the NFL draft for the first time in two decades, including burners Jerry Jeudy in the first round and KJ Hamler in the second. That marked the first time in franchise history they used their first to selections on wide receivers.

Elway also drafted O-linemen Lloyd Cushenberry and Netane Muti and tight end Albert Okwuegbunam, Lock's favorite target at the University of Missouri.

All this firepower raises expectations for the Broncos to end a four-year playoff drought. And it impels Lock to play even better than he did in his 4-1 December audition after spending most of his rookie season sidelined with a thumb injury.

Lock certainly sees the remodeling—which is being overseen by new offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur—as both an endorsement and an inducement.

"I think the moves just end up saying they saw something positive in the way I played those last games, potentially being a guy who can stay here for a long time and help the Broncos win as many games as possible," Lock said. "It means a lot to me to see that happen."



AP

In this Dec. 22, 2019 file photo, Denver Broncos quarterback Drew Lock (3) throws against the Detroit Lions during the first half of an NFL game in Denver.

One thing Lock knows is all this firepower doesn't guarantee anything, especially in the AFC West, where the Super Bowl champion Chiefs reside.

"Nothing's in fine ink right now in terms of wins and losses just because of all the guys we've drafted," Lock said. "We've got a lot of hard work to put together."

For now, the bonding and learning is going on via video conference.

Lock still hopes he'll be able to gather with his receivers sometime this offseason for a personal passing camp like Peyton Manning used to do.

"Yeah, of course—when it is socially acceptable to do that and to have the best interests of everybody (in mind) as far as health goes," Lock said. "I'm going to keep that in mind first. But then once that is ready ... I've got all of them on a text. So, whenever the professionals say it should be OK, whether that's the NFL or that's the CDC, we're going to have them ready and we're going to get out there and get this chemistry down and get things rolling."

Gore, Jets agree to terms on 1-year deal

In New York, Frank Gore's likely run to Canton will go through the Big Apple for at least one season.

The seemingly ageless running back, who turns 37 next Thursday, agreed to terms on a one-year contract with the New York Jets on Tuesday.

Gore is third on the NFL's career rushing list with 15,269 yards after passing Barry Sanders on the list last year while with Buffalo. With the Jets, Gore will join a backfield that includes Le'Veon Bell and fourth-round draft pick La'Mical Perine.

SMALLER

From Page 20

and *Inside The Games*.

Athletics, baseball, badminton, golf, triathlon, and beach volleyball, are the six sports initially proposed for the next Mini Games and the former is expected to draw the most number of participants. The medal-rich swimming was excluded from the list, as when discussion on the calendar of events for the competition was made, the former Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi has been closed. An initiative to reopen the 50-meter pool has started early this year, but was halted by the pandemic.

Meanwhile, tennis and weightlifting, are being considered to make the Mini Games program, which will be discussed in the PGC general assembly tentatively set this September on Saipan. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***

VANUATU MINI GAMES

The CNMI's Raymond Santos competes in the weightlifting event in the 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Weightlifting is being considered on the list of programs for the next Mini Games.

PLAY

From Page 20

League season is quite unfortunate. Obviously, the parents and coaches are disappointed, but most especially the kids. These young players have been practicing for months and ready to start the season. But they understand the severity of the situation and that safety is always the priority. I want to thank the board for all that they do and for making this difficult decision. It is not what we all want, but it is in the best interest for everyone involved," Camacho added.

The Braves are one of the early teams that have confirmed their participation for the 2020 season. They have squads in all four divisions—the Minor, Major, Junior and Senior League.

"It's harder for those kids that are on their last year in the program. We were not able to have the Junior and Senior League competitions last year because of damage caused by Super Typhoon Yutu and now this pandemic," Camacho said.

"Nonetheless, the Braves are ready to play once we are cleared and would love to have pick up games on weekends for those other teams that are interested. We don't need to keep scores and make anything official, just a chance to have these kids play and keep them busy," he added.

Former CNMI Senior League All-Star manager Patrick Tenorio is also open to having a Little League competition when this pandemic is over and backed SLLB's decision to call off the season.

"It's the right move now. We have to take precaution and hope for the best, for this pandemic to end soon. If things get better and we're all out of the woods, then maybe we can work on something for the kids," said Tenorio, who handed the reigns of their Major team (McDonald's) to his sons Patrick Jr. and Anthony Tenorio and Nate Deleon Guerrero. McDonald's won last year's Major title after stunning pennant champions Kagman Little Legals in the finals, 16-4.

"This year, we already have our uniform when he learned about the suspension and then the cancelation. The kids hope to have the chance to play in that uniform when it's safe to return to the field," the older Tenorio said.

If there won't by any tournament, Sen. Vinnie Sablan (R-Saipan), whose son plays for the Falcons in the Major division, encourages players to continue training at their homes or do other activities that will keep them occupied and healthy while still following safety measures.

"The cancelation of the 2020 season is very unfortunate but it is well beyond anyone's control as we must prioritize the safety of our community, especially our children. I'm sure the kids are patiently waiting for the time to return to the field, but in the meantime the players should use this time to do practice drills at home to prepare for next year's season," Sablan said.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

In this 2019 file photo, the Kagman Little Legals' Albert Adriano, left, avoids a tag from Falcons catcher Delton Lieto, while the former's teammate Jarod Muna is still down after sliding home during the top of the first inning of their Major division game in the Saipan Little League Baseball at the Capitol Hill Ballfield.

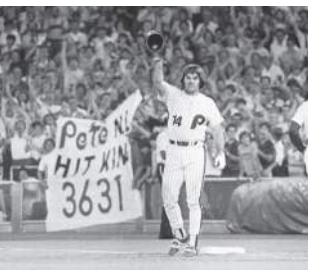
76ers preparing for playoffs vs Celtics

PAGE 17

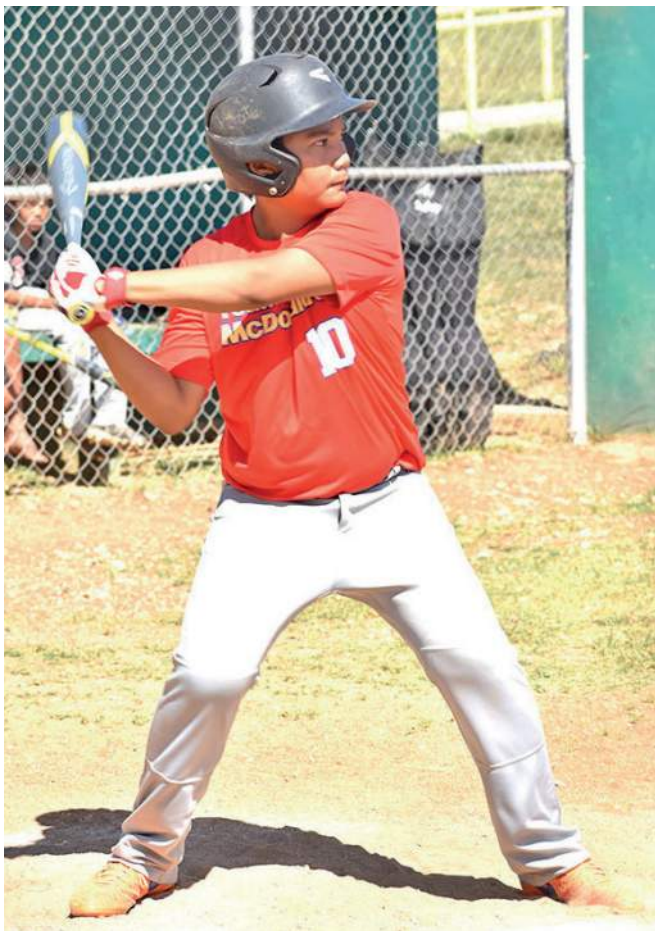
Saipan Tribune
Sports

MLB stars shine in 1981 shortened season

PAGE 18



'Let's play ball'



SAIPAN TRIBUNE

McDonald's player Casey Chambers waits for the pitch during their title game against the Little Legals in the Major division of the 2019 Saipan Little League Baseball at the Capitol Hill Ballfield.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

In this 2018 file photo, an NSA Braves pitcher, right, goes for a catch, while a Cubs runner slides home during their game in the Minor division of the Saipan Little League Baseball at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With the 2020 season of the Saipan Little League Baseball being shelved due to the coronavirus pandemic, people involved in the program are hoping that when things have settled and it's safe to play, a local tournament or even friendly games could be held.

"I was hopeful that we can have a local-level league. Obviously, it can't be sanctioned by Williamsport, but to give the kids a chance to play once it is all safe and OK. We can have a Fall or Winter League. It is sunny here for most of the year so that is possible," said Braves manager George N. Camacho after being informed that the SLLB 2020 season has been canceled as per the directive of the Little League International.

"The cancellation of Little

See PLAY on Page 19

VANUATU MINI GAMES

In this 2017 file photo, the delegates of Team CNMI participate in the opening ceremonies for the 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Smaller delegations for 2022 Mini Games anticipated

The Pacific Games Council sees a lower number of participants in the CNMI-hosted Pacific Games due to the coronavirus pandemic and the limited events proposed for the competition.

PGC president Vidhya Lakhan, in an interview with reporters in Fiji, was quoted as saying, "we firmly believe that the 24 island-nations will be there for the Games but the size of the Games in terms of numbers taking part could be much lower than what one could expect of the normal Pacific Mini Games."

In the 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Vanuatu, over 1,500 athletes and officials participated in the quadrennial meet that featured 14 sports. In the next Mini Games, which was initially set for 2021, but was moved to 2022 to avoid clashing with the Tokyo Olympic Games, only six sports were suggested, while two more events may be considered pending approval of the PGC and its member association. The PGC required host country to have at least 12 sports for the Mini Games. However, the CNMI was allowed to scale down the competition and the budget—from $8 million to $3 million—after a series of discussions, as the Commonwealth needed to put its resources to the recovery efforts from Super Typhoon Yutu that hammered the islands in 2018.

Then less than two years after Yutu flattened the islands and a little over one year before the Mini Games come to Saipan, another crisis hit not only the CNMI, but the rest of the world. This pandemic, according to Lakhan, and the challenges it brought to the world, would limit the capabilities of the 24 nations to send delegates for the next Mini Games.

"As organizers we want to have a big Games but we have to be mindful of what is happening around us. So the prime objective will be to ensure that all the countries are there and the bigger the delegation, the better it is for us. But if the delegations are smaller, we will understand," Lakhan was quoted as saying by *Fiji Sun*

See SMALLER on Page 19